

# AINSLEE'S

A MAGAZINE OF CLEVER FICTION

Vol. XI

JULY, 1903

No. 6

## CONTENTS

Cover Design . . . . .	Henry Hutt	
The Ribboned Way. Novel . . . . .	S. Carleton	1
A Recruit in Diplomacy. Short Story . . . . .	Justus Miles Forman	38
Remorse. Poem . . . . .	S. H. Peters	49
Omnipotence. Poem . . . . .	Ella Wheeler Wilcox	50
The Disenchantment. Short Story . . . . .	Edward Steed	51
A Leaf from His Salad Days. Short Story . . . . .	Baroness Von Hutten	57
The Ideal Man. Essay . . . . .	Kate Masterson	60
Absolved. Short Story . . . . .	Frank R. Robinson	62
The Power of Woman. Essay . . . . .	Una Hudson	73
The Conspirators. Poem . . . . .	Charles G. D. Roberts	75
Perdita. Short Story . . . . .	Florence Holmes Beach	76
A Striking Example. Poem . . . . .	Nixon Waterman	85
The Day of the Dog. Short Story . . . . .	W. Bert Foster	86
Hush. Poem . . . . .	Edmund Vance Cooke	90
The Passing of Lon Twitchell. Short Story . . . . .	Chauncey C. Hotchkiss	91
Good-bye, Grey Town, Good-bye. Poem . . . . .	Arthur Stringer	100
On Hand Clasp and Kisses. Essay . . . . .	Frank S. Arnett	101
'Twixt Cup and Lip. Short Story . . . . .	Guy Wetmore Carryl	106
How Julia Was Saved. Short Story . . . . .	George Horton	113
Love's Awakening. Poem . . . . .	Madeleine Windeyer	120
The Gift of the Sea. Essay . . . . .	Lucia Chamberlain	121
Dr. Polnitzski. Short Story . . . . .	Arlo Bates	122
The Great Strange Glory. Poem . . . . .	John Vance Cheney	128
The Perils and Pitfalls. Short Story . . . . .	Joseph C. Lincoln	129
Lines. Verses . . . . .	Robert Loveman	136
The Calculation of the Countess. Short Story . . . . .	Mrs. Reginald de Koven	137
Under the Surface. Short Story . . . . .	Annie C. Muirhead	143
The Mistress of the Situation. Short Story . . . . .	S. Elgar Benet	152

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION, \$1.80

SINGLE COPIES, 15 CENTS

Monthly Publication issued by AINSLEE MAGAZINE CO., 156 Fifth Avenue, New York.

Copyright, 1903, by Ainslee Magazine Co., New York. Copyright, 1903, by Ainslee Magazine Co., Great Britain. All rights reserved.

Publishers everywhere are cautioned against using any of the contents of this Magazine either wholly or in part.

Entered September 11, 1902, at New York as Second-class Matter, under Act of Congress of March 2, 1879.



## **Purity Personified**

No other soap leaves such a sense of freshness and cleanliness as Lifebuoy Soap. Use it any way you wish and you will find it has unusual and exceptional properties. It not only cleanses like magic but also safeguards the health, as it disinfects—purifies, at the same time. Buy a cake and use it all up and if not all we say of it, dealer will promptly refund purchase money.

# THE RIBBONED WAY

By S. Carleton

Author of "The Lame Priest," "The Convenient Career of Mrs. Osborne,"  
"The Corduroy Road," Etc., Etc.

## CHAPTER I.

**B**ILLY MOULTON, the leader of cotillons, the coveted of solicitous mothers, the adored of women in his own set, lay flat on his back on the top of a high rock, and yawned luxuriously.

He had been fishing and walking since morning, and with repose a great peace possessed his soul. He had lain motionless for a good half hour, and finally pushed his cap under his dark head and unclosed his eyes. Even then he directed his lazy gaze straight above him.

Over his head a tall pine tree spread delicate gray-green network against the pale ineffable crystal of the noon sky, and up and down its trunk fussed a yellow squirrel and scolded at him. A soft breath of wind came and stirred the sleeves of his flannel shirt, but it brought no sound with it except the angry voice of the squirrel, till a match spat viciously on the ground eight feet below. From the foot of the rock arose a slow film of wood smoke and scattered as it took the breeze; the yellow squirrel, with a splutter of fury, ran up its tree and vanished; Moulton laughed and sat up.

"Joe," he said, hanging his legs over the edge of the bowlder and looking down, "we're trespassers here! The owner doesn't like us."

An Indian, on his knees by a creeping blaze, looked up and laughed, too.

"Not very much power, that owner!

Down there now," he pointed over his shoulder, "very much different."

"Where d'ye mean, down there?" Moulton knew better than to put any interest into his voice.

He had been peculiarly brought up and had peculiar tastes for a millionaire. As a boy he had been allowed to run wild in the Canadian wilderness till he grew up blood-brother to Indians, animals and the wind that blows through the trees. Now, at thirty, he was about the best looking, and absolutely the most sought-after man in New York; and financially and socially a power in the land—in the winter! It was not once in a summer he was seen of men; or women. With every June he vanished silently to the eastern woods and the free life that makes a man or breaks him, and every summer Joe Julian, companion of his childhood, met him wherever he was pleased to go. He was stuffed to the brim with the thoughts and superstitions of the woods, and spoke Indian no worse than Joe did English. They used the two interchangeably, except when they were displeased with one another. Moulton repeated his casual question now as Joe would have done, in soft gutturals:

"What's down there?"

There was no answer.

From his eminence he surveyed the country for himself and saw it was just plain swamp. He was on the inner slope of a long narrow valley, the already westering sun on his left shoulder, and all the hollow between him and

the opposite edge of hills was swamp, rank with nameless green. Here and there a path seemed to wind through it, and at intervals were bare places and water. The air over it quivered in the white implacable sunlight, but otherwise it was an innocent-looking place enough, two miles or so across, and he could not see how long. It occurred to him that to have crossed the tail of it after the morning fishing would have been a great saving to his legs.

"Doesn't Big Lake Teâm lie just across there?" he inquired, suddenly.

Joe nodded.

"Then why don't we go there now, instead of back to camp? Might as well try the big lake for the evening fishing!"

"Too far." Joe looked at the trout he was arranging over his fire, not at Moulton.

"Too far! Why, it's no more than two miles over that swamp, man."

"Thirty mile to Big Lake Teâm," announced the henchman, stolidly.

"Across that place! You're cracked. I could be over there before you got those fish cooked. By George, they're beauties! If there are any better fish in the big lake we'll risk your thirty miles when the sun drops."

Joe arose leisurely, leaving his fish to cook.

"Look, see!" said he, pointing a yellow finger to the southwest. "There the run, where we catch big fish this morning; there," the finger traveled south, "there Little Lake Teâm, our camp. Over there," if his finger had been a compass needle it would not have deviated less, "northeast, Big Lake Teâm, thirty mile from where we stand." He relaxed into slow Indian, polished, emphatic. "That swamp is not so pretty as it looks. I do not cross it; no one crosses it. Some Indians have tried. Now we go around. It is not a nice place to die in, that swamp."

"Die in!" Moulton gaped at him. "Nobody ever died crossing a little place like that."

"Gee-Joe Brooks, and Ben Christmas, and the Frenchwoman's son, they died—in my day," he returned, slowly. "My father knew more. So now we go

around. There is no pretty luck in that swamp."

Moulton turned with some severity.

"Frank Labrador told me he crossed the swamp from Big Lake Teâm to my camp last summer."

"That way—yes! Not back again."

"But why?"

"We don't know." Joe was immediately stubborn in English. "We tell you what is, not why. That fish," detachedly, "most done."

"Um!" grunted Moulton. He wondered why Joe did not desire to go to Big Lake Teâm, but if he waited he would find out. In the meantime he ate pieces of browned pink trout off a bark plate, and watched the cooking fire die down as the afternoon quiet grew and the trees took a different color against the sun. But when he had finished his first pipe he filled it again, and addressed his placidly dozing retainer.

"I'm going to take a walk in that swamp. It's solid rot about not crossing it! You hang on here if you don't want to come."

"Very good, we stay." There was a curious flicker of expression on the face of Joe Julian, son of a chief, but his ragged sleeve hid it. He lay like a log as Moulton went down the slope to the swamp, but as the first rock hid the splendid, sharply-moving figure, he arose unostentatiously and melted into the landscape; even a chief's son does not get a chance to crow over his best friend too often.

Billy Moulton, happily oblivious, struck the edge of the maligned swamp and, by luck, what looked like a path.

"It's pretty wet, but it's a path all the same!" he thought, progressing joyfully. "If I listened to all Joe's nonsense about this country I'd never get anywhere. Thirty miles be hanged! I'll be trying for those big fish in the other lake by sundown." And his left foot went down into bottomless black water. When he pulled it out, his right foot went. Mr. Moulton sprang backward with some haste. The place, of course, was not a quicksand, only a little difficult to manage. He altered his course a trifle and set forth again.



From the hillside the swamp growths looked comfortably low, but out here it was different. The bushes were up to his chest, and he was a tall man; and their tops were palpably browning in the glaring heat in spite of the swamp water that arose a foot above their roots. They smelt stifling strong, too, and their stems were as thickly set and tough as galvanized wire netting. Moulton was shoving through them with a careful eye on the point for which he was steering, when he struck a thicket of swamp maple so impenetrable that he was forced to go around it.

"Hullo!" he muttered. He pulled up standing, partly with surprise and partly because there was no more ground to walk on. He had come out on the edge of a wide pool, dark and glassy in the sun. It was rank with yellow lilies, and from the mud at his feet arose a waft of wild sweetness that reminded him of something familiar. In the heat and dazzle he stood and sniffed, but his memory would not work. The only thought that came to him was the purely incongruous one of Mrs. Marescaux. It was a month since she had crossed his mind, and with an odd feeling of something dimly understood he realized that it was strange he should have forgotten so easily a woman who had been so much a part of his everyday existence as Tita Marescaux. Her presence, her rooms, her very gowns had held a peculiar fascination for him; and yet with the instant she went out of his life all thought of her had gone, too. He did not hide from himself that it had been with a sort of relief that he had ceased to think of her and her chiffons and her rings. He saw no earthly reason why he should think of her now.

He looked down restlessly and stood staring. The most extraordinary flower he had ever seen was growing at his feet. It was lifted high on a fine, leafless stalk, just four petals and some white stamens; but the four petals were coal black. A queer feeling went through him, for it was certainly the scent of that black flower that had reminded him of Tita. He picked it, and as he stood with the strange blossom in

his hand it struck him that the dark pool with the yellow lilies was a nasty-looking pool and that there was no sense in standing by it; the black flower which was his very own discovery and probably new to botanists, looked suddenly unhealthy, monstrous. He threw it away with a quick jerk of his hand, but the light stem caught on his flannel sleeve. It clung there, unnoticed, as he retraced his steps a little, and worried through a clump of Labrador tea that was, like everything in the swamp, a foot higher than it had any right to be.

Joe Julian, on the hillside, grinned. Ten minutes later he scuttered to a better post of observation and glared at the swamp. Moulton had vanished. The dark face under the shock of black hair was on the instant grim with anxiety. So had Ben Christmas vanished, and the Frenchwoman's son.

"*Sokbaaghmi!*" he yelled. "Go quick." And was apparently rewarded on the word. Moulton's disreputably-clad shoulders and old cap reappeared like magic on the brink of the pool he had recently left. Mr. Moulton himself was occupied in profane annoyance and heard nothing.

"It's the same pool!" said he, wrathfully; and the sun at that moment going behind the only cloud in the sky left the still water black and sinister. There was certainly something about that pool that was distinctly not nice, and under the strong scent of the swamp flowers the black, muddy rim of it smelt. It was also plainly idiotic that a man used to the woods, plowing in broad daylight through scrub seldom higher than his head, should not be able to make a bee line from one clearly seen point to another; but he did not seem to be doing it. He was not even getting away from an undesirably feverish pond. Mr. Moulton set determinedly forth on a well-planned system of angles which must work to admiration.

Half an hour afterward he arrived unostentatiously at the dead cooking fire and sat down. His cap was gone, his dark hair streaked damply over his forehead, his flannel shirt molded sharply to his skin; he was also adorned impar-

tially all over with black mud. Joe Julian took no notice of him, by word or look, and the silence of the hillside struck Moulton as palpable and heavy.

"It's a little hell down there," he found his voice hastily. "You were all right about it! I couldn't get two hundred yards out. But it's beautiful, too," and the insignificant black flower he had incomprehensibly failed to throw away caught his eye where it clung to his sleeve. "Ugh!" he said, inconsequently, and shook the tiny horror to the ground. "Every fish in all Big Lake Teām may go to the bottom for all me if I have to cross that place to get there. Come on; let's go home!" Little Lake Teām seemed a clean, open, desirable spot after that horrible, sweet-smelling swamp; and yet, as he shouldered his basket of fish, he turned his head to look back at the place that had been too much for him.

"Look here, Joe," he exclaimed, "Frank Labrador crossed that place! There must be a way. Though I don't mind saying I couldn't find it."

"There is a way, but—" if Moulton had not been used to him he would never have known his voice was anxious, "we think very hard to find him."

"I can if Labrador can," Moulton returned, crossly.

"Labrador," energetically, "is son of a devil! You like that swamp?"

"Lord, no!" said Moulton, truthfully, remembering five minutes he would have been glad to forget, having employed them for something idiotically like panic. "No."

"Labrador like him," returned Joe, enigmatically, and started off on a quick jog. For half an hour of walking he said nothing, then he called back from his ten yards of lead, "We most home. This our barren."

Moulton pushed through the trees and joined him.

They had come out on the top of the hill above their own camp into the softness of the good afternoon breeze, sweet with wholesome blueberry and fern. The clean, everyday world had come back again. If it had not been for the mud on him he could never have be-

lieved he had been an hour struggling to get out of a twopenny bog. But all the same, he was annoyed that he had been baffled there; it was a new and wholesome sensation for Billy Moulton. Joe, standing unnoticed beside him, turned one flashlight of black glance on him before he marched on down the hill.

"*Wassowek*, one flower!" he mused. He had never appeared conscious of any flower at all. It was not good, but it was better than a bunch of them.

Moulton whistled cheerfully as he reached his camp and his two tents. It was a place to dream of, let alone the fishing, and the comfortable elemental life where hostesses ceased from troubling and the idle were at rest. Bathed and changed and lying on a moosehide at his own door, he knew the wind that lulled him blew over ten miles of lake water and uncounted miles of houseless woods where the moose browsed and the black bears shuffled up to the blueberry barrens. He was never lonely, but if he had been Lane was due to arrive, and Lane was, and always had been, a sort of second self to Moulton. He turned on his elbow and was indolently aware of silence in the kinty where there ought to have been voices. Noel, Joe's scullion and subordinate, had gone down the lake at gray dawn to see if Lane had come, and had apparently stayed there. He shouted authoritatively from his moosehide.

"Joe! Hullo, what's wrong?" for the face of the approaching Joseph was not pleased.

"That Noel never come back."

"Well, it's early yet. He may have a load. Mr. Lane's stuff may be at Welsh's."

"Plenty time two hours ago. We think," gloomily, "he p'raps not come to-night. Only half sense that boy, anyway."

Moulton scanned the empty lake, following Joe's eyes. There was no sign of the errant Noel, who had been known to disappear before for his own ends, and was only useful because he was beyond all praise in a canoe.

"There's nothing he could be waiting for," he assented, resignedly. "I only

hope there wasn't a letter and he's lost it. Mr. Lane wouldn't like to be left to wait at a place like Welsh's."

Joe nodded, biting off a chew of tobacco.

"You fish to-morrow?" he inquired, absently, his gaze on the lake.

"You old idiot," said Moulton, with a flash of affectionate comprehension, "I believe you think I mean to go back to that swamp and have another try at drowning myself."

"Don't you try that no more." Joe turned on him solemnly. "Even Labrador only try once."

"Why?" asked Moulton; but he knew. He had not made a fool of himself in that swamp for nothing.

Joe fell into English.

"We don't know. The place is a bad place. Some Indian say——"

"What? It's all rot, Joe. The only trouble is that you're afraid of it."

Joe's open mouth shut like a trap.

"P'raps! We mos' forget," he stopped, picked up a caterpillar and swore inwardly as he murdered it. Indian talk was not good for white men, even Moulton; he should have been silent about the swamp unless he had desired to lose the man in it. He shifted the conversation with a palpable jerk. "I hear some news yesterday. Noel tell me some man have house now on Big Lake Teâm."

There was a pause, blank with annoyance. Moulton had no desire for neighbors on Big or Little Lake Teâm.

"Well, that man can stay there!" he announced, irritably. "I'm glad of your beastly swamp now; he'll have to do thirty miles around before he interferes with me." He had no curiosity at all as to who the man was. "What are you looking at?" sharply.

Joe pointed down the lake.

"Here come Noel, around that point. He got some one with him in canoe."

"Lane," said Moulton. He found with surprise that he was somehow inhospitably sorry. He picked up a field glass that lay at his elbow. "Great Scott!" he muttered, blankly, as he caught the moving canoe, "that's not Lane. It's—it's a woman! It's——"

his hand dropped to his side as if it were paralyzed, "Mrs. Marescaux; Tita!"

## CHAPTER II.

Tita it was; and there was a look on her face as she saw the tall figure on the shore that was half fear and half triumph.

The triumph conquered, as she bade herself forget that she was arriving alone in the deep woods at the camp of a man whom she had choked off from proposing to her, and remember what she must.

A week ago she had realized what it meant to move always with the smartest and richest people you knew and be living on your capital all the time. For the capital had quite placidly come to an end, and left her sitting for the last time in her lovely flat thinking it was lucky the crash had not come in the winter. She had no relatives, and for friends had but people whose houses she could not afford to stay in.

She had been a widow for five years, and had gone where it was amusing; not where it was profitable. If she had always known there must some day be a financial crisis, she had known it gayly; something would be sure to turn up; there would be a way out somehow. But when the end came it seemed simply the end. An invitation to camp out with the Kilgores, who were new people and not successful, was her only hope for board and lodging; she could be useful to the Kilgores—and be despised by all her world for it! But it was her only alternative from starving, or having people "be kind to her!"—to Mrs. Marescaux, who was used to ride at horse shows, to adorn smart parties, to be amused and flattered and made much of. She could never, never bear that. And her thought glanced at the remembrance of a man who had loved her and she had choked off.

She had been a fool not to marry Billy Moulton then and there; but the end had seemed very far off then, and it was no use weeping over spilt milk now.

Billy would not show up till autumn, and by autumn she must have found out a way to live for herself. She was a clever woman; she had kept her forlorn affairs to herself. Not a soul who had admired her gowns and her air and her position had any inkling that for the future Tita Marescaux had dropped out. She packed up her clothes, and started for her visit to the Kilgores, since needs must when the devil of poverty, who makes more sinners than any other devil, drove her. And halfway to the Kilgores idle curiosity had put salvation into her hands, if she dare grasp at it. And she had dared. She sat now in the canoe that was drawing in to Moulton's landing, and exclaimed softly at the man who had run down to meet her.

"Billy!" She knew there was no color at all in her face, and it angered her. "Didn't you know I was coming?"

"I—I couldn't," said Moulton, stupefied. She looked younger, more exotic, in her blue flannel and straw hat than he ever remembered her in trailing gowns and jewels, and he stood dazedly taking stock of her. Surely she had not always been so pale. He came to himself with a guilty start. "I beg your pardon a thousand times," he said, "I could not believe you were true. Let me help you out." He stooped and swung her up beside him as easily as a child lifts a kitten.

For a moment she drew a slow breath; then she spoke, with the little laugh he thought he had forgotten.

"It is a long way, but—" she turned and looked behind her at the tents glinting in the setting sun, the slow, blue smoke rising from the kinty, the pink and yellow marvel of bark that Joe called a camp. "How lovely!" she cried—and wondered how Billy could live in such a place. "But it isn't very big, is it? How do we all pack in? And where?"—she was as easy as if she had parted from him yesterday—"are the others?"

"The others!" Moulton turned, dumbly, and considered them. Noel, warm and grinning by the canoe; and Joe, absolutely expressionless beside him.

"They're here," said their master; and he said it lamely.

No shadow of his meaning seemed to touch Mrs. Marescaux.

"Then they might have stayed to meet me," she returned, smartly, "unless they're all out fishing. He"—she moved her lovely head toward Noel—"said you would be out fishing. It was the only thing I could get out of him," and she laughed, up a little scale and down again. "I should like to see Mr. Kilgore fishing. Can't I have some tea?—I'm simply choking! And then you can take me to see him fishing."

"Kilgore!" Moulton exclaimed, sharply; "Kilgore!"

Tita turned her soft, gray gaze on him.

"Don't be so reproachful; I didn't mean to be nasty. Only you know he must look funny in a canoe! Now, Molly—" she seemed suddenly to take in Moulton standing tall beside her, and something in the set of his speechless mouth cut off her laughter like a knife cut. "What is it?" she cried. "Where are the Kilgores? Is anything wrong?"

"Everything, apparently," said Moulton, inwardly angry and relieved, and furious at being either; outwardly he spoke very gently. "You will think me an absolute idiot, but—I haven't the very vaguest idea what you mean. Did you think the Kilgores were here?"

"Think!" he saw her pupils dilate and flood the wonderful gray of her eyes as she looked at him without breathing. "Why, I came here to stay with them; they said they would send a canoe for me. Aren't they here? Do you mean you're not staying with them? That they didn't send for me?"

Moulton, with the calmness of despair, reflected that there could not be a Kilgore house within fifty miles, or he would have heard of it.

"I don't even know them," he said, bluntly. "That was my canoe that brought you out; I'm here by myself. That was why I was— But don't bother about it now. Come and rest, and have some tea; and then we'll talk. You must be worn out, but you needn't be worried."

"Worried!" she repeated; she shut her white lids sharply, so that he saw her long lashes against her cheeks for just long enough to be afraid she was going to cry. "But I must be. You must think me mad—anything! to have come here like this. They told me—the boy said—he had come for some one, and of course I thought it was for me. It's the seventeenth, isn't it?" and as he nodded she pulled a letter from her pocket. "Look," and he could not wonder that her voice shook a little, "look, and you'll see how I got here! The only thing I can't understand is what became of the Kilgores' man. Your boy said this was Lake Teâm."

"It's Little Lake Teâm, yes. But —"

"Oh, then," the color flooded her face, but she spoke naturally, "the Kilgores have a house on it as well as you, and you can take me over presently. Read that note. But first do, do give me some tea. You frightened me so that you owe it to me." And there was no doubt of her need of something as she turned away and sank down wearily on the tumbled moosehide.

Moulton sent Joe flying for tea, but he stood himself precisely where she had left him and studied the document she had put into his hand. The writing was small, black, easy to read.

"BELOVED TITA: We are here and settled. It is very beautiful except the company; the sooner you come and help me with them the better I shall love you. I will send into Welsh's for you on the 10th, and if you are not there the man shall wait till you are. On the next page are directions for getting to Welsh's, and after that it is plain sailing. You are, please, to stay with us as long as you can bear it. Yours,

"M. KILGORE."

The reader was no longer puzzled as to what had become of the Kilgores. The top of the nine was a little open, but it was a nine for all that; only Tita could ever have made a seven out of it. He went on mechanically with the page of succinct directions.

"Change at Mowatt to narrow-gauge railway and go on till it stops. Then ask for Carter, who has been told to take you on to Labray's. Sleep there and they will take you

to Welsh's in the morning. Ask there for the man from Lake Teâm."

It was word for word what he had written to Lane, with one exception. He had carefully put "Little Lake Teâm;" and this lady seemed blandly unconscious that there was any other Lake Teâm than her own. He turned a string of quick questions on Noel, and added the answers to the letter. The Kilgores were, of course, the people who had built a house on the big lake, the idiotic Noel the officious instrument who had brought an unfortunate lady to the wrong place. He bestowed on the boy a torrent of contempt, which clouded his intellect for the evening.

With a placid grin Noel handed his master a packet of letters, observing that the white woman had found them at Welsh's. Moulton hardly heard him. He clutched the bundle and rejoined his guest. Here she was, at seven in the evening, but four miles from Big Lake Teâm as the crow flies, and thirty in actual distance. It was ten miles to the landing where she had come, and impossible for any woman to go back to Welsh's for the night. That outlying squatter had neither wife nor child, and the dirt of his abode reeked to heaven.

"You can't go there," he said, aloud.

"Go where?" Her tea had come, and she was thankful for it. "I'm going to the Kilgores the instant you are ready. You didn't think I meant to stay with you, did you?"

"No, I didn't," the reply was relieved, if her ears had been quick enough, and perhaps they were, for she flinched. "But I don't see quite what else you can do—for to-night" (and where was his rapture, even his pleasure?). "Look, I'll show you how it is."

He spread out the Kilgore girl's letter, and explained what it never dawned on him she had discovered for herself at Welsh's, when, frantic at finding out her honest mistake in the time of her arrival, she had turned that dirty place inside out in the hope of finding in a pile of letters lying there something which might show her how to get on to the Kilgores.

"You see where the trouble is. They're sending for you on the nineteenth, not to-day. Their house lies like this," drawing a map on the ground, "from here. Take Welsh's for the base of a triangle; the lake on the left of it is Little Lake Teām, the lake on the right side Big Lake Teām. The Kilgore's house is there somewhere, I don't quite know."

"Where Welsh lives is the beginning of a neck of land, then?" she took a twig, and followed his plan, musingly.

"That stretches up between the two lakes—yes!"

"And, as you've drawn it, his house stands on the widest part?"

"By a couple of miles. It's not more than four miles across country to the big lake from here. But you'll have to go back to Welsh's to get there."

"That filthy place!" with flat dissent. "Why can't we walk across from here?"

"It's impassable," said Moulton, shortly, thankful he knew better than to try to get a woman through that swamp in the dark. "We couldn't get through."

"Impassable." Tita surveyed gravely what country she could see, and it did not look at all impassable. But, of course, if he said so, it was. Things were coming her way with wonderful celerity; she had not thought it would be so easy to whistle Billy back again. She was suddenly mindful of the packet of letters in his hand. It was lucky she had not been surprised at seeing him; she had almost said she was surprised at first. But she was quite cool now, and ready. "Then," she looked up, and her unconsciousness was perfect, "what am I to do?"

"I don't know," returned her host, abruptly, "I'll ask Joe."

There was no disguising from herself that the answer was a jar. Six months ago he would have asked no one, have believed heaven had opened if she had been cast on his hospitality. It flashed over her that he was thinking of propriety—propriety out here!

But he was not. He was thinking of Lane who might arrive in the morning, and of Lane's unhidden astonishment; and, underneath both, of a dreadful con-

sciousness that he did not like Tita any more and that he did not want her in his woods. Everything about her jarred, and the reason of its jarring was a mystery; there was no change in Tita. It never occurred to him that there was a great one in himself; or that the Moulton of New York was not the Moulton of the woods. He came back from interviewing Joe and sat down.

"We'll paddle you down to Welsh's at daybreak," he said, "I'm sorry, but we can't do any better. You couldn't sleep at Welsh's house, and it would be too hard on you to try to get you through to-night. You know I would if I could," almost humbly.

"I believe you would," said Tita. A flat horror of disappointment that was too bitter for anger made her face quiver. It was not in this way she had meant to be received at Moulton's camp; not for this that she had seized, as the desperate seize an inspiration, on that bundle of Moulton's letters at Welsh's, on Moulton's man and canoe. He had thought the Kilgore girl's letter an ordinary invitation. Well, she could not explain to him that it had been a rope held to the drowning, nor that she had been glad enough of it till in the upside-down squalor of Welsh's cabin she had seen that handful of letters addressed to him. Till that minute she had known no more of his whereabouts than if he had dropped off the earth; to find that he was within reach of her meant the chance of a far stronger rope than Molly Kilgore's, to a woman who had her last forty dollars in her pocket. She had cared for one man in the world, and he was not Billy Moulton, nor the defunct Marescaux, but it was not love that could help her in the strait she was in now. Moulton and Moulton's money might have been hers six months ago, might now, if she knew him; and she thought she did. She looked into his face, and could not tell.

"You'll have to think for me, Billy," she said, slowly. She had called him Billy often enough, but she did it differently now.

There came over the man with a rush the same feeling of oppression, of strug-



gling, which had shamed him that morning in the swamp. The woman beside him repelled him, for all her sweetness. He remembered, as of some one else, that he had been obsessed with her, mind and body; had been more or less her slave since her widowhood; and now he longed to see her go back to Welsh's. In his discomfort he fumbled at the letters she had brought. There was none from Lane, but that said nothing; Lane would come when he chose. And his duty was plain. He turned to Tita.

"Will you put up with what I have, and stay here? You can have the house, of course! I'll sleep in one of the tents. Then at sunrise I'll take you on to Welsh's, and around to Kilgore's. Lane ought to turn up to-morrow. He and I can paddle you up the big lake."

"Lane!" It was the only name in all the world that could have made her heart faint in her. "What Lane? Do I know him?"

"Buff Lane! No, I fancy you don't, though most people do."

Tita formed two replies in her head, and used a third.

"Do you mean the Mr. Lane who's supposed to hate women?" Her voice was cold.

"I suppose I do. But you mustn't take him at what people say," he answered quickly; and she flushed as if he had reproved her.

For a moment she sat very still. Buff was coming, might meet her at Welsh's, would know where she had spent the night; Buff, who thought her an angel! If she must go alone to Welsh's now; if she must lose herself in these awful woods and die here, she would not have Buff—her Buff—know to what a shame she had descended! She could see that little glance of his telling her he knew her game—did he not know, to a square, where her pieces stood on the world's chessboard? She flung her chance of Moulton and Moulton's money aside as a worthless thing compared with one look from a man who could give her nothing on God's earth—or she had not been here.

"I can't stay!" she exclaimed. "Won't you—can't you get me to the Kilgores'

to-night? I'm not tired—I'm not, really."

Moulton suddenly liked her better than he had since she came.

"I'm afraid it would be too much for you, and"—he looked at her with frank eyes—"if you're thinking of Lane, Tita, he would be the last man in the world to misunderstand your being here."

She could have screamed at him that it was because Lane would not misunderstand that he must never, never know.

"It's not that," she whispered, "I want to go. I can trust you never to speak of the—the wretched mistake—of my coming here, I don't want any one else to know; not Mr. Lane," she stuck on the name, "not the Kilgores. Surely you can see for yourself," sharply, "that Kilgore is not the man to allow for childish stupidity in a woman like me."

"Why do you go there?" it came out involuntarily; Kilgore was not a man any one knew.

For one instant the truth was at her tongue's end; that she had been, in a queer impulse for Tita Marescaux, kind to the Kilgore girl, of whom the women fought shy for her looks and the men for her father's reputation; and that from a chance word had grown adoring gratitude from the girl, and pride in the acquaintance from the father, till now she had but to ask from them and have. But all she said was:

"I like the girl. Besides, the father is not so bad; he can't help the way he made his money. Oh, Billy, can't you get me there to-night? You used to like me—won't you help me now?" She had forgotten herself till she was desperately natural, and something of his old passion for her awoke in his eyes as he answered her.

"It's exactly as you say, Tita. I'll take you."

"No, not you! Send that man; they would know you."

Moulton laughed.

"They never saw me in their lives. You can say I'm a half-breed if you like; though, honestly, it wouldn't matter. The woods aren't New York; no one could possibly misunderstand."



"I want to go now," said Tita; she looked around her, and was smitten afresh with the horror of having Buff know she had ever been here. "Now."

### CHAPTER III.

It was a white dawn; pure white.

That was the first thought the Kilgore girl had, as she undid the flap of her tent and slipped out into the world.

Around her was a space cleared of trees, with half a dozen tents pitched in it; tents that were gray against the dull green of a sunless world, mysterious in motionless white mist that was born with the dawn to die with it. Twenty yards aside stood what Kilgore was pleased to call his shack, a long, low house verandaed all around, and set so close within living pines that their trunks were within arm's reach of its walls. Molly Kilgore discarded the shack and its floors and bedrooms for a tent and a bed of hemlock boughs; it made for happiness to watch her canvas roof come white with the day. She stepped softly away from it now, avoided the house and came barefoot over the wet green moss to the lake shore. Under the cold wringing mat of moss the earth was warm; she wriggled her feet into it, and stood comforted, looking before her.

There was nothing to see but fold on fold of pearl white mist; there might have been no lake but for the clear strip of water that lay visible for two yards or so from the rocky margin, and that the mist had shores. Every here and there a point of dark woods showed through it, cutting the formless color that was neither white nor pearl. Over her head the sky was milky, yet translucent, filtering light like a tent of spun glass. By and by it would break. There would come an opal shimmer; a flying rent of blue; a wave of rose and daffodil.

"Oh!" she cried, and hushed herself. The dawn had caught her suddenly; the pearl mist in one heart beat was opal, pale rose; it split into innumerable

whorls, evanescent, mystical, fleeing without wind; and across the low-lying mass of it came the splendor of living flame, lifting it up, beating it down, bidding it die in glory, since die it must.

The moss at her feet turned from olive to green, the black woods came to color with a leap; the circling shores nearest her sprang unto sight, though straight across the lake the sea of mist still lay pink and pearl and golden. Far out in it she heard a loon call and dive with the sound half uttered. The cold unearthly cry startled her as the bird had been startled; she had forgotten the loons. She stood and waited for an answering call, and, not two hundred yards from her, heard it. The long-drawn, mocking melancholy of it rang in the morning. It was not the same bird that had dived, and she waited for the first one, and after a long minute heard it. The second loon laughed.

Something in the sound made the girl lift her head and listen; she could not tell why she listened, but she did; and it came again, a little nearer; after it a soft suck and gurgle as if a fish arose far out in the calm water under the blanketing fog. In the north the sky rent suddenly into morning blue, the eastern pink turned orange, the mist flamed as the sun came over the hill; but Molly Kilgore was looking at none of them. Before her, straight out across the lake, the vapor had divided; between breast-high walls of flame and pearl lay a lane of calm water, and coming down it, as the kings of the earth pass between the living walls of a quiet multitude, came a birchbark canoe. The girl stood motionless, staring.

It was none of her own canoes; the morning fishing was let alone at Big Lake Teâm, not a soul in camp was awake but herself and the cook. It was a strange canoe, and a strange Indian paddled bow in it. Her glance flicked to the steering paddle; she had never seen one so lightning quick and silent. She did not know she drew a long, suffocated breath.

A man knelt bolt upright in the stern of the canoe, bareheaded and bare-

throated against the sun. The set of his head and shoulders was like a stag's, as keenly alert, as graceful; his flannel shirt was rolled up over his bare arms, the carved bend of his wrist changed, flattened and recovered again, like a tempered blade. His face was blade keen, too, spare, dark, clean shaven; he held his head a little back and sideways, and his eyes—

The sun leaped into the girl's eyes and dazzled her, but not till she had seen the man smile. It was not the smile of the men her father knew; it pleased her. And the next instant something like a pang shot through her—though, of course, she had never thought a strange man coming out of the sunrise would be smiling at her! What had seemed a formless heap of rugs amidship of the canoe had stirred, sat up; a woman's head, bare, black, exquisite, was outlined against the morning sky. It was to her the man was speaking, for her the keen sweetness of his eyes; and Molly Kilgore would have known the back of that head among a thousand.

"Tita!" she said; she was thunder-struck. She had never known Tita to arrange the smallest journey for herself. She was not even due till to-morrow, and here she was with a strange man and a canoe, at an hour unheard of—for her! Miss Kilgore never remembered her bare feet nor her perfunctory toilet. She ran along the shore to the landing place, moving with swift accuracy from one big stone to the next.

"Tita," she called, poising like a bird on the landing-plank, "this way! You can't land where you're going."

Mrs. Marescaux jumped. If it had not been for a quick, inconspicuous movement of the tall man steering, she would have had her cold bath on the instant.

"All right," she cried, wishing fervently that Molly had had sense to stay in her bed. As she waved her hand she leaned forward with a quick whisper to her *vis-a-vis*: "You'll remember, won't you? You found me at Welsh's—I don't know you—you're—"

Moulton nodded shortly. Having paddled most of the night, not to speak

of carrying Tita bodily over every bad place in the neck of land at Welsh's, he would not have been averse to a decent word or two. There was, of course, no sense in confiding in the Kilgores, but he had no opinion of lying to them either.

"Be easy," he said. "Say what you please; I'll stick to it. But if that's Miss Kilgore, she's seen me." He had been conscious merely of a flying, white figure and a girl's voice calling. He had never cared for girls.

"Billy," the woman whispered, "you know it's best—for now! Say so."

It was just what he did not do. The girl was calling again, in a curious, sweet contralto:

"Swing her to the left; there's a rock before you. Left!"

Moulton instinctively obeyed her. When the rock had slipped by he looked up.

She stood on the landing plank, tall, wide shouldered, round waisted and narrowhipped. She had on a white flannel shirt thing, and her white skirt was gathered around her in one young hand, as a nymph gathers her draperies. Her waist was girt around with a heavy silk band and her shirt bagged over it like a boy's. She was barefooted, he could see the rose of her heels, the wet ivory of her insteps as she stood poised, certain, confident on the narrow gold of the new plank. She was like a white goddess on a golden pedestal, but there was no marble about her. Her face was white and rose and alive, her careless hair burnt gold, her steady eyes dark under the curved hand that shaded them. And, miracle of miracles, she was not thinking of herself at all, but of the oncoming canoe.

"Easy!" she cried; she jerked her head sideways, dropped to her knees, and swayed forward, catching the gunwale. She did not look at the man whose eyes were on her, but at Tita Marescaux, huddled warm and pale in a nest of rugs. "I never expected you," she exclaimed, "I never dreamt of sending for you till to-morrow. How you must have hated me. And where in the world—" she stopped short. Her eye had caught those wrappings Moulton

had piled around his charge: a white rug lined with vicuna, a crimson wadded satin from Japan. They were not Tita's; she knew Tita's possessions by heart; and—they had never been borrowed at Welsh's. She gave one lightning glance at Moulton and saw his clothes were no better and no worse than the Indian's in the bow of the canoe. His dark face was absolutely without expression, his hand— Molly Kilgore looked no further. She waited for Tita to introduce him; to begin the tale of how she had come across a man and a canoe and vicuna skins. But Tita did neither.

"Can you get me out?" she asked. "These men want to get back to Welsh's."

"Oh!" said Molly; if Moulton had made the slightest movement she would have been sure Tita was lying; she was only half sure now. But she did not betray herself. "They'd better have their breakfast first. The cook's up," she observed, practically. She was distrustful enough not to look at the man who held the canoe steady with the stern paddle; the other man was a plain Indian.

"They're in a hurry," returned Tita, as if she were. "How do I get out?"

Moulton said something in Indian. Joe, without a jar of the canoe, was out of her, and had Mrs. Marescaux on her feet and safely landed. She fumbled nervously in her pocket, but she spoke graciously.

"Thank you very much, I am more than obliged to you. Please take it."

"It" was a dollar. It flashed through Miss Kilgore's mind that the hire of two men and a canoe would be five. Moulton wondered sharply if he, too, were to have a dollar for his share in the play; but Tita only nodded to him. "I know you want to get away," she looked straight at him. "Thank you again. Good-by."

"Tita!" expostulated Molly. She was not quite so simple as she looked, but she was unprepared to have it the Indian who shook his head. The other man was playing with his paddle.

"Plenty breakfast in canoe," Joe observed calmly. "We go now. *Adiou*,"

and he swung himself in. Miss Kilgore waited for the other man to speak, but he only stuck his paddle in the water and shoved the canoe bow out.

"Oh, good-by!" cried Mrs. Marescaux, suddenly. She did not want Billy to go off angry; she could not dare offend him.

Moulton laughed; and stopped himself.

"*Adiou!*" he said, exactly as Joe had said it; he shifted a little, so that he faced the Kilgore girl. "*Adiou, sagamaskw,*" said he, slowly. "*Welâalin. Welâis munaa moola wona!*" He never dreamed that she would remember the soft-sounding words.

"What did he say?" asked Tita, sharply.

"I don't know," the girl answered, indifferently; and immediately began to repeat his words in her mind till she had the sound of them like a parrot. "For Heaven's sake," she said, aloud, "tell me how you got here! Where did you pick up the—canoe?" She had meant to say "the man," but something stopped her. He puzzled her, and she was pretty sure he was no puzzle to Tita. She threw one look at his back as he paddled away and it told no tales; some of the men who had been working on the shack had been as lithely well made, as born to the purple. Yet, whoever he was, he had fitted into the picture of the morning—all but his vicuna skins. She was suddenly a trifle cross. "Come up to the house. The coffee's ready; I smell it," she said, curtly, and led the way, up a carefully cleared path this time.

Tita was oddly silent as she followed her. She could not decide whether she had been a fool or a wiseacre. She had been perfectly natural for once in her life, which abnormal departure frightened her. Every bit of diplomacy she had, came to her tongue's end, and foolishly; she would have done a hundred times better to have trusted the other woman.

"Wait for me," she begged, softly, "I'm tired. And I'm so horribly afraid I've put you out by coming."

"Oh, you only surprised me," came from ahead, with lightness and no con-

viction. "But why didn't you wire? Some one would have brought it through."

"I had no time," her voice caught desperately. "I had to come, Molly. I wanted—sanctuary!"

"Poor Tita," said the girl, softly, as though it were she who were the elder by ten years. She opened the shack door into a big room and led the way across it to another. "Here's your home; and you have the living room between it and the men's quarters. Sit down and tell me about things; they are none of them awake."

"There's nothing to tell," drearily, for in common decency she could not air her ghastly poverty to her hostess, even if it were wise. "I was miserable, that's all. So I came. And Welsh's was dreadful; I couldn't stay there and I couldn't go back."

Miss Kilgore shut the door into the other room, and faced around.

"Where did you find the man?" she asked, inexorably.

"The Indians?" Tita's eyes never flickered. "At Welsh's. They were waiting for some Mr. Lane, to take him to some other lake."

"Indians? Oh!" with indescribable softness.

"Well, one was!" pettishly. "The other was—was some sort of a half-breed."

"With vicuna rugs," mused Molly. She flashed around on her guest unpardonably: "Did he take you in, Tita, by saying he was a half-breed?"

"He didn't say it at all." It was an excellent chance to hedge, and Tita used it. "He never said anything except that he could spare time to bring me here, and that he was going thirty miles in an opposite direction to-morrow." It was as well to remove him at once from the position of a possible neighbor. "And they weren't his rugs, I suppose! I told you he was waiting for some man. Anyhow, I couldn't stay at Welsh's and—I thought you would be glad to see me." The tears in her eyes were real. She was tired to death, and more than half sure she had been a fool to leave Moulton's. What could it have mat-

tered if Buff had found her there and despised her? It would not have affected her daily bread, and he would have to know some time. The thought made her put a quick hand to her shaking lip.

"Oh, my dear!" cried her hostess, penitently; she laid a warm arm around the other woman's shoulders. "I didn't mean to be a brute. You know I don't care who brought you, as long as you came. As for the man, you'd make a coal heaver show at his best; it's none of my business who he was. I'll go now and send you coffee, and Anna—I brought Anna—and won't you go to bed till lunch?"

"Who's here?" the hasty question caught her at the door.

"Father and," Molly hesitated, "and Mr. Squires and Mr. Garnett—and Reginald Lygon."

"Oh!" said Tita; though she had been prepared for the first two.

"You needn't 'oh!' " wrathfully. "I never asked him; I didn't know father had. I hate him. However, except at meals, he hasn't seen me, thanks to a quick pair of legs. I shan't require to take so much exercise now that you've come," and she laughed, but her eyes were not at all amused.

Mrs. Marescaux breathed a fervent thanksgiving to Providence that Lygon was not an early riser; he would have hailed her half-breed cheerfully by name. She always thanked Providence when she felt sure her own forethought was her benefactor; otherwise, it brought you bad luck to be grateful. But as soon as the door was shut she spoke aloud.

"I'm well out of the half-breed business—well!" and she blandly scented the joyful aroma of coffee.

Molly Kilgore, oblivious of time and her toilet, repaired on the double-quick to the back regions and Frank Labrador, the Indian guide. He was not a particularly reputable person, but she had taken a fancy to him.

"Frank," she said, she had a way with her that Mrs. Marescaux would never learn, "what does it mean when you say——" she paused, and got out

a sentence, phonetically, with infinite pains, "*Ah-de-yón sáh-ga-márskwe! Wel-láh-leen. Wel-láy-is múna móola wúna.*"

"That very good Indian," the man answered, without surprise; and Tita might not have congratulated herself on an inconspicuous arrival if she had heard him. "That—Good-by, my lady. I thank you. But I wish I had never seen you!"

"Oh," said Miss Kilgore. "Oh! I want you to send down to Welsh's this afternoon for some trunks." She would not seem to set a runner on the heels of any man, and the afternoon would be time enough; Tita could borrow. But she turned thoughtfully away.

"So he *was* a gentleman," she said, oracularly, in the seclusion of her tent. "With vicuna skins, and tanned black as a sweep and hired at Welsh's for a dollar! I wish," she pulled her hair loose with an angry wrench, "I wish he hadn't dared to speak *at* me. I wish he'd been a common lumberer. I don't like liars—except Tita. I'll put his eyes and his voice and his throat straight out of my mind this minute." And she carried it out by softly imitating the cry of a loon. He had done it beautifully.

#### CHAPTER IV.

"My foreman said he couldn't build a house here," said Kilgore, chuckling stoutly, "nor get us here, nor our provisions; and I said it was no good being the president of ten lumber companies and being told you couldn't do as you wanted. So Molly and I just came up here by ourselves, with fifty men. We got the house up in a day. I tell you those men worked for their lives, and—they hadn't any foreman. I wasn't lumbering twenty years on my own hook for nothing; you can't tell me what a man can't do in the woods with an ax and an adze. And it didn't cost so much, either; Molly could tell you, she paid the men."

Mr. Reginald Lygon wriggled uneasily; he had heard the history before.

Besides, he wanted to talk to Mrs. Marescaux on important subjects, and his host was a fool not to help him. As slim, and handsome and hard an animal as walks this world, he had a mind of his own, and perhaps he used it; but all the thoughts in it were born of his body. He was the crack player of the year at football, golf and rackets; and if there were men who wondered how he combined that with—other things—they did not say so—to women. Just now his thought was to marry Molly Kilgore. He wanted it, her father wanted it, and the only trouble was the devil of silent, smiling evasion, which seemed to possess the girl. Lygon had thought it would be easy work, out here in camp, and it had been a jar to find it anything but that. He was outgeneraled in the woods, and he promptly realized it. He could not get the hang of paddling himself in a canoe, and he got lost if he strayed half a mile from the tents.

It was no fun to have a girl walk away from him and disappear as if into the ground, nor to hear her laugh from ambush while he struggled in thick underbrush for a profane half hour. After two days he abruptly ceased to request her society; and she was oblivious that determination taught him a little more about the woods every hour, and that when he knew all he needed she would do well to fear him. He was a born still-hunter, and he bided his time, just now in the society of Mrs. Marescaux and Kilgore. And he wished Kilgore would stop boasting he had been a barefoot boy; it was indecent. Why couldn't he go away and leave Tita in peace? Not that Lygon had any fêre to make love to her; he required no practice. His love-making was as thorough and as scientific as his skill at games.

"By the way, where is Miss Kilgore?" he inquired, hoping to set her father fussing; he knew better than to pursue her himself—yet.

"She's out," Kilgore returned, comfortably. "It beats me the way that girl gets on in the woods. She gets it from me, I suppose. You don't often see a better man than I was—when I had to

be! But Molly loves it. I don't see you getting around with her much, Lygon."

"She's too good for me," said Lygon, simply; he seldom lied. "But it occurred to me that she was gone a good while."

"She'll come back," easily. "Hi, Squires," as a stout man appeared up the path from the lake, "couldn't think where you'd got to. What do you think about a little formality? Seems to me just about a good time."

"Mr. Squires paused, portly and amiable. "Well," he mopped his brow and fanned himself, "I don't know that it isn't. I've been trying to catch a turtle for the ladies. I'd no idea, now, that a turtle was such a handsome animal—but he didn't seem to think the same of me. I've been on the push in that flatboat for an hour," his small eyes twinkled. "And Garnett can swim."

"How do you know?" Kilgore and Mrs. Marescaux were simultaneous. Garnett had never been known to do anything but exist beautifully in immaculate clothes.

"Left him swimming," simply. "Frank and the cook are getting him out now. I did think it was rather deep for turtles, but I tried it, and so did Garnett, and his yellow French book and his umbrella. And as you're so pressing, Kilgore, I'll join you in a cocktail. It's good for you in the open air and after anxiety, Mrs. Marescaux."

"Great Scott, Squires," said Kilgore, angrily, "you might have drowned the man! You'll get no drink from me till I see him. Come on."

Mrs. Marescaux lifted pregnant eyes to Lygon as the two fat incongruous figures departed arm in arm over the green moss and broken fern.

"I should think Mr. Garnett was the last man to like practical jokes. He's so manicured," she said, idly. "How on earth does he stand Mr. Squires?"

"My dear girl, they're pals." Lygon alone with a woman was a different man from Lygon in general society. "Go everywhere together. I hate them both myself."

Tita laughed.

"Do you know, I like Squires? He

told me once his idea of hell was that he would be shut up in a cheap hotel bedroom with the furnace gone out. You know immediately what a man is when you get his views on hell."

"I dare say," Lygon yawned without apology. "Don't believe in it myself."

"You will before you die," she replied, with the malice of conviction; her nose wrinkled deliciously as she laughed into his face. "I don't believe it's any good, Rex! You'd better give up the chase, and amuse yourself by making love to me."

The man's hard, fine-grained cheek flushed. The many women who had cared for him had been apt to forget that his brown-pink coloring and long eyelashes did not move his hard eyes any wider apart.

"You never can tell from where you sit, Tita," he said, disagreeably. "I'll play my own game, if you please, and I don't mean to make love to you while I'm at it. A man needs to be clever—for you. You don't care for things. I don't suppose you ever sat out a football match in your life."

"You—dear—simple—boy!" drawled Mrs. Marescaux. He was quite aware that she was absolutely lovely and as absolutely out of place at Kilgore's, and he had a sudden sharp appreciation that she would be a poor friend, perhaps, but a good enemy. "Athletics, and a girl! Just one girl. I see."

"It's all you need see, Tita." There was no one about, and in the dappled sun and shade of the half-cleared camp he could put all the softness of his voice into her Christian name. "I mean it this time. I want to marry her."

"Papa Kilgore has a little money," she said, unimpressed.

"Well, I can't marry a girl without any, perhaps." He stood up, and looked down straight into her upturned eyes. "But it's got very little to do with it. You know I never say I love people; as a rule I don't; this time I do. Are you going to tell her things? Or are you going to be square? For old times' sake."

"So he buried her for old times' sake," quoted Mrs. Marescaux,



thoughtfully. "I'll see. I—will—see! There is nothing in old times or new, my ingenuous youth, that you can adjure me by, and," coolly, "I think you know it. Here"—she stripped the intimacy from her voice as she would have taken off a glove—"here come the port and stoutlies, Mr. Lygon!" as Kilgore and Squires turned the corner. "I always think of them as that. So much more expressive, you know, than the stout and portly!"

And Mr. Lygon stared thoughtfully at her lovely back as she swept past to join them. Where on earth had that girl got to? It was nearly seven o'clock, and she had never come home.

#### CHAPTER V.

Molly Kilgore sat in the morning sunlight, and was conscious that her world was out of joint.

There was, to begin with, something the matter with Tita. It was not like Tita to make mysteries with her; and there was mystery in the air. Also she knew with shame that when the man whom Tita called a half-breed (and had been silent about ever since!) had come smiling out of the sunrise, she had felt as she had never felt before. She had never met a glance like his, nor heard a voice that disturbed her quick blood. When he had gone the lake seemed lonely; the woods grim. The very look of him had given her the woman's knowledge that with him she would never be afraid of anything in all her life. And this June day she was afraid; of nothing, and less than nothing.

The night before she had come home late from a little exploring expedition of her own, and arrived at the dinner table in time to hear Mr. Lygon lament that he was of no use in a canoe; and this morning a chance sight of him had shown her the trust to be put in his word, when she happened on a secluded cove, and on Mr. Lygon in a canoe. A week ago he could not steer the simplest course; now he sent his canoe flying in figures of eight, crowded her to

full speed, stopped her all quivering. And the strength of him, the silent accomplishment, sent the blood from the girl's heart. He had not seen her. She dropped to her hands and knees, and crawled swiftly away.

He had lied about his paddling. He could do it now, if not as well as she at least with double the speed; there would be no more walking away from him in her canoe. And in another week he would be able to find his way in the woods, and there would be no more taking him out and losing him. This morning was a sample of what he could do if he put his heart into it; and it was, to a girl who disliked him, an ugly sight. She plumped into a thicket of sweet fern, and lay there to consider things.

Kilgore was a man who could not be contradicted openly; to oppose him was never wise. She knew why Lygon had been asked to camp; knew that to let him go about with her and then refuse him would be to arouse every rough and domineering instinct in her father. Her only safety was to make it look as though Lygon did not care to be with her.

"If father weren't 'self-made,'" she thought, wretchedly, "and if he didn't think Mr. Lygon grand, I could do something; even if it were only to find some one a little grander. But father never knew any of the men he wanted to in New York till he met Mr. Lygon. He'd be beaming if only I were Mrs. Reginald Lygon, with my name in the papers with the rest of the Lygons—he knows people turn up their noses at Molly Kilgore. Poor father," she laughed, not too steadily. "He can't see why I don't like Lygon. I know, and I don't know how I know, for I never heard anything about him, that he's a beast—" passionately, "just a beast! And if I refuse him father will be raging. In another two days I won't be able to keep out of his way, unless I stick to the shack and Tita. I've got to do something. If nothing happens father won't blame me; he isn't like a made-up father in a book, who'd tell Lygon he could have me. I know as well as I know my prayers that he's told



him he must settle it with me. And there'll only be one way—to father! I've got to do something. Only I don't—" She sat up stiffly with the sudden thought that came to her.

"The swamp—where I was yesterday! The swamp! He's afraid of it; he was with father the day he got bogged; he's heard all Frank's horrors about it. I heard him say, and he wasn't lying, that he wouldn't take a thousand dollars to cross it. And after yesterday, with a little patience and some red ribbon, I'm not afraid of any swamp. There must be nice places on the other side, and no one would ever think of it."

No one indeed. The subject came up at lunch, and even the cynical Garnett had listened credulously to Kilgore's casual acceptance of the impossibility of the place. Lygon, without the vaguest idea that Tita had put into his head the ancient idea of absence (with another lady) making the female heart grow fonder, had put himself out of the way by inviting her to go fishing. Mr. Kilgore and his friends sought slumber, and Mr. Kilgore's daughter the forbidden ground.

She had learned a little about it yesterday, with more excitement and uncertainty about her ultimate return than she had quite cared about, but there was more at stake than being late for dinner to-day.

By three o'clock she had disappeared as if she had gone into the ground, dressed in her shortest skirt, and with a shopful of lengths of red ribbon in her pocket. There was a deadfall where she went into the swamp, and no marking that with red ribbon, but when she had passed there stood a bush of flaming kalmia where kalmia never grew. It would take more than a town-bred Lygon to think of that. She slipped through a sheltering thicket of alders, and tied her rose-red token boldly on the other side of it. She knew where to get out now; it was reassuring after yesterday when she had not known it. And then she began to thread her way.

Half a mile of it, with stops to mark out her track so that it was visible in

the swamp and not from any commanding hillside, cost her wet feet and a plunging heart; but she went slowly on. If she had a wild longing to run, no matter where so that she ran out of the swamp, she killed it; she was even bold enough to think the thoughts that formed themselves in her brain. It was all very well to laugh at Frank's tales about the swamp; it was another thing to be alone in it, making your way painfully along narrow winding aisles of moss between runlets of bottomless black water, never daring to take your eyes off the last red ribbon before you tied on a new one; to make sure that the way back was clear to you, and not as it had been to Ben Christmas and the Frenchwoman's son, when all the time you had a feeling of uncanny companionship; of a whisper at your very shoulder even while you turned to see that there was nothing there. Kilgore's daughter had a natural aptitude for the wilderness, and she was sturdy flesh and blood, else perhaps even the thought of Lygon and the marriage she would not make would not have driven her through the haunted place like a hunted doe.

She was really not long at it; if she had known it, Frank Labrador, without the ribbons and with no idea of ever crossing back again, had been longer; yet it seemed more by far than two hours when her feet felt solid ground. She tied the biggest ribbon she had left on a tree in triumph, and ran up the first rise of a low hill. She was over the swamp. It was with no affectation that she stretched herself on the clean pine droppings to rest, for more than her body had felt the strain.

"But I'm over," she thought, happily. "And judging from the way I felt nobody else will ever try it. There's no one to see my ribbons from this side, and no ribbons to see from the other. I can come and go whenever I like, and in a day or two it will be easy."

She had almost forgotten that curious threatening of evil in the swamp, of silent feet other than her own that walked beside her; and remembering it recalled something else; and God knows from

what cave woman the thought came to her. She took the only gold thing she wore, and flung it as far as she could throw into the swamp. It was ransom—oblation—anything you like; she said to herself that it was foolish—and very wise. Then she looked about her and laughed. The hillside could not have been prettier if it had been made for her.

Behind her were high rocks, pine shadowed, fern grown; some of them were massed together to make a half circle of clear ground before them, and at one side of it there ran down a small brook, very clear, very dancing. She got up, and explored a little. There was an overhanging stone that sheltered the very place to leave a tea kettle; day after day she could come here and cook what meal she pleased; could bring a book and read, or wade in the brook, or follow it up the hill through the sunshine, over the long, green mosses and the rock fern. She began to sing to herself very softly; it had come to her suddenly that in all her life before she had never known what it was to be free and happy.

Somebody else, not two hundred yards off, was thinking that he was neither. Things were not going well with Billy Moulton. He said to himself that it was first and foremost the receipt of that letter from Lane saying that he was laid up and the date of his arrival more than uncertain; second, that Joe had sprained his leg and was useless a yard from camp, and third, that he had lost his best fly book the evening before. But he knew all the time that the reason he sat and chewed his empty pipe on the hillside was that he had behaved like a fool because Tita Marescaux had ordered him to.

"If I hadn't sat there and pretended to be a half-breed, and called out something in Indian that I didn't mean, I might be over at Kilgore's saying things in English that I did," he burst out, finally. He had put out of his mind the facts that Kilgore was purse-proud and pushing, and some of his lumber transactions more than sharp practice; the man must be better than his reputa-

tion to have such a daughter. And then he swore at himself. It was not for a piece of beautiful white and gold girlhood, with common sense and a gallant way of bearing herself thrown in, that he should have wanted to go to Kilgore's; it ought to have been for Tita. And he was more than ever conscious that out of Tita's sight he never thought of her at all, and that with her felt her jar on him. The girl had been all of a piece with the dawn and the lake; he supposed some man, luckier than he, would one day tell her so. Not, of course, that he wanted to talk to her like that; only she had had the look of a comrade, of careless boyish give-and-take that would last in rough weather or smooth.

It smote him with a sense of injustice that he could never make a friend of that girl. In all decency he was bound to Tita, and Tita's way of life; dinners and dances and operas, all things he liked in their season, but not for all the long year round. He had sometimes thought there must be somewhere in the world a woman who would love the woods as he did, who would learn to fish and follow a trail, and sleep at night under the stars. And he knew that none of these things could he teach Tita. He had seen her so clearly at his own camp the day she came to him by mistake! What glamour had come on him in the paddle down Little Lake Teâm, over the long portage where he carried her in his arms like a child? It was the old primal instinct that had undone him; the dark reminder of a time when one night under one set of stars with one woman had meant just that and no more. It was nothing supersensual that had made him ask Tita Marescaux to marry him; he had nothing to plume himself on. The thing was done, and he had done it. All that remained was her answer; she had not really given him that. But he was perfectly aware what it would be. And—he informed himself sharply that Tita was a sweet little lady, and if she could not answer to all the longing for a wild life that was bred in and in to him, it could not be expected of her. Men's wives, he knew—

with a knowledge he would have been better without—seldom did care for the things their husbands had at heart.

He crammed his dead pipe in his pocket, and strolled aimlessly down the hill; it was blackguardly to sit thinking that Tita's yes or no to him would mean liberty or prison, the direct opposite of his thought of it three months ago. If she said "yes," there was nothing for him but to hope to God that he would forget in the town how she had looked to him in the real world, where love was love, and not a phantom born of lights falling softly on the prettiest woman in the smartest gown in the room.

He had on moccasins, and from unconscious habit went softly over the broken ground; and suddenly, and without noise, he jerked up at attention. Every memory of Tita Marescaux went straight out of his head.

Down below him, kneeling in a half circle of rocks, was the Kilgore girl. She was singing a little tune with a softness that was yet rich and full, and as she sang she built a fire. Moulton, turned to stone, watched the bend of her bronze gold head, and the cleverness of her fingers; and suddenly fairly bounced with a thought that came to him. She was splashed with dark mud from shoulder to heel; she had come over the swamp, and—she would have to go back again! He remembered his own efforts to cross, and stood appalled. He had made one step to go to her and tell her not to attempt it when he remembered. He was a half-breed, and would frighten her; or he must give Tita away. Mr. Moulton sat down dumfounded in an inconspicuous position, and waited for what was going to be allowed to happen. At least, she should not go like Ben Christmas and the Frenchwoman's son; he had main strength enough to prevent that. From where he sat he could not see her, and by and by he wondered why she had stopped singing. He leaned forward cautiously; got up without any care at all; and stared. She was gone; with her well-built fire unlighted. He turned and ran up the broken ground to the highest rock he knew as he had never

run on the cinder path, and he had been a good man there in his day.

## CHAPTER VI.

It is a curious fact that a girl known for no time whatever can shake a man's faith in the friend he has trusted from his youth. Moulton, glaring from the hillside, waiting to see Molly Kilgore founder in the bog as he had foundered, as according to Joe all human beings must, had any belief in that gentleman swept away from him. He had mounted his rock to mark just where the girl stuck, and race down to help her; but it appeared he might as well have stayed where he was.

A plain mark in her white gown, she was moving forward slowly, and very deviously; but always, nevertheless, in the direction of her own camp. For one other instant Moulton was sure he ought still to follow her; she might be bogged a mile off as easily as a hundred yards. But remembering his own progress in the swamp he stood still. She was making far better weather than he had done; he might frighten her if he plunged after her, perhaps make her lose her head. Yet he would not have another comfortable moment when once she was out of his sight. And it was not till then he remembered his field glass. He had brought it out to study the way of an eagle in the air, and it did not dawn on him that quite as inexplicable, and nearer home, was the way of a man with a maid. He whipped out the glass, and caught the moving white girl.

He had no idea how much time had flown when at last he dropped his hand with a satisfied sigh; he had seen his speck of white vanish into the thick brushwood of the rising ground on the Kilgore side of the swamp, and that was all. Then he realized that his eyes were tired, and felt furious that he had let Joe take him in with a hobgoblin theory about the swamp. It was all fudge. If a girl could come and go across it anybody could. He returned to his own camp on the double, hot foot

to convict Joe of idiotic superstition; and when he got there did nothing of the kind. Instead, he held his tongue for his own reasons, which would no longer hold after he had triumphantly crossed and recrossed the swamp for himself. He set out for it at ten the next morning. It did not dawn on him to go in where the girl had gone in; her red ribbons had been too carefully placed to be visible from the hillside, and he saw no sign of anything to guide him, even if he had thought of it. What a girl could do, he could. He did not even notice particularly that the sun began to cloud over as he went it.

At three in the afternoon Molly Kilgore, having got rid of Lygon with an ease that ought to have made her suspicious, came to a dead halt where she flitted from one red ribbon to another. If the swamp had been uncanny yesterday in the bright sun it was terrifying under the dull, gray sky to-day. Half a dozen times already she had stood still and heard her own heart plunge, but this was different. There was something moving behind the next clump of bushes, and not that intangible something sprung of God knows what that she had feared all day yesterday at her elbow. This thing was alive—human!

"Lygon!" she thought. She could hardly dare slip softly, as an otter slips, to the screen of bushes and peer through. What she saw sent her fear flying, and set her to laughing wickedly. All that she had wondered, and been angry about, on that unforgotten morning by the lake shore, she could know now—if she wanted to! And she thought—perhaps—she did. It would serve Tita right to be scored off for her come-by-chance Indians, who lived thirty miles off; and the rest of her soft little fabrications. For ten yards away Tita's half-breed sat on a quaking tussock, and the cleverest woman in the world could not have guessed at his station from his clothes. Not a stitch of them was visible through their coating of swamp mud. His blade-keen face had a whimsical look, and yet he seemed to be sitting with the immobility of ex-

haustion. As she stood astounded he began to whistle through his teeth; took a cigarette from a gunmetal case, and tried to light it. The matches, that had been loose in his pocket, were useless; he threw them down one by one. If he had known Molly Kilgore was there he might not have spoken aloud in the ordinary English of a gentleman.

"So much for my rank conceit of myself!" he observed, without much of it left. "I'll take another cast. It dawns on me that I'm pretty efficiently bogged without any of Joe's spooks." He bit on his unlit cigarette, and arose, with some trouble, to his feet. He was on bad ground; he did not need it to shake under him. He began to move slowly to his right.

"Oh, my goodness!" thought Molly Kilgore, with sudden knowledge. No matter what he was, nor how he had chosen to masquerade to her, she could not see him drown by inches in choking, bubbling black mud. He was making for the very worst hole in the swamp, and once he was in it there could only be the end. She could never help him, even if he could tell her what to do. She wrenched the bushes away from her face and called to him.

"Wait! You can't go that way. I tried it yesterday. Oh, wait!" In her horror her voice came in a thick whisper that did not carry; and Moulton made another step forward. This time she shrieked to him with all her lungs, and the sharp ring of it brought him up standing.

"Keep still!" she cried; and he turned his head and saw her, up to her waist in swamp maple, parting the tough boughs before her face.

Her hair was like a flame of gold against the dull greenness, and he realized stupidly that she was all white. She had been rose that morning in the dawn. Instinctively he put his hand to his cap, which was not there; and as he stood his feet sank to the ankles with a sucking sound that was loud in the quiet.

"You're going the wrong way," called Molly; she did her best to be casual; if he took two more wrong steps she could

never get him out. "Can you come back just as you went, to me? It's quite safe where I am."

She had not known she could quiver as she quivered while she watched him, though of course it had nothing to do with the man himself; she could not have borne to see any living creature drown in that wicked swamp. It made her sick to hear the suck of the ground as he came slowly back to her. When he was at the maple shrub, and through it, she held fast to an outlying bough. She had been just in time.

"What possessed you to try the place?" she asked, sharply, as if it were her business to blame him.

"I thought it was easy." He told the truth as he would have to Joe. "I saw you do it yesterday." He threw his chewed cigarette behind the screen of maples, and looked at her. There was no mud on her to-day, except on her shoes, and the color had come back to her face.

"I've worked it out." She was suddenly mindful that he had pretended to be an Indian, that if he lived thirty miles off he must be hanging about here for his own ends, and that on a morning he had deliberately spoken no English before her, so that Tita might have a free hand when she said he was a half-breed. She turned on him icily. "You can speak Indian. Why didn't they tell you this place wasn't safe?"

"They did." But he did not lower his eyes. "I believed it till I saw you come and go as if it were nothing. I owe you very much for calling to me. I didn't deserve it; but if you hadn't I might have thrashed about in this place all night."

"Like Ben Christmas!" she remarked, dryly. It was her opinion that she had saved his life; he might have said more about it.

"Or the Frenchwoman's son. Ugh! I tried not to think about them!" said Moulton. He could not help it, his old horror of the swamp was back on him.

"How do you know about them?" She was surprised out of herself.

"I'm half Indian," he said, simply. "At least, I'm white enough, but I was

brought up in camps with Indians; which makes this afternoon all the worse. I ought to have had instinct to get through."

"There's no sun," said Molly, with sudden relenting. If he had really been brought up like that he had not been acting such a lie; and if he had told it to Tita she would have immediately thought him a half-breed. She began to feel a lively curiosity about him, and reflected inconsequently that she did not know another man who could look presentable when he was head to heels black mud. "Where do you want to go?" she inquired, craftily.

"Over there," he pointed, "where you went yesterday. I was sitting there when I saw you. I've a camp a couple of miles off." The girl wished she were sure Tita knew that. If she did she had meant to keep her half-breed to herself, and perhaps he had, too. The finding of him suddenly ceased to please her.

"I'll show you the way," she said, rather stiffly. If he had not been so foolhardily lost she might have merely told him to look for red ribbons, and let him manage for himself. But it would be too inhuman. "I marked it yesterday. I did it," hastily, "for reasons of my own; I don't want it spoken about. Though, of course," she had seen him flush angrily, "I don't mean you would be likely——"

"To talk about it? No," he replied, rather huffily. "If you would rather not show me I can manage perfectly. At least," for fear she took him at the lie and went out of his sight, "I'd try it."

"I wouldn't have called to you if I'd thought you could manage," answered the girl, coolly. "Will you come after me? These," she pointed to a rose-red ribbon tied to a bush, "are my marks. But it's pretty boggy between some of them."

Pretty boggy was mild. He watched her flit before him from one bad place to the next, stand on good ground where one red ribbon after another flamed in the dull, gray and green of the day. The heat was damply insistent, but there was no rain in the sky.

He kept wondering as he walked what reason in the world brought her to this hellish quicksand; and suddenly she paused and answered to the thought, though it was from reasons of her own.

"You're a man; you ought to have better nerves than a woman. Tell me, do you feel a queer sort of horror in this swamp? I don't mean so much going this way—but the other. There's a tangible sort of—of, dread—I don't know whether you understand me. Do you think a man would feel it?" Her mind had run back uneasily to Lygon, and the chances against his following her.

"I feel it," said Moulton, ignorantly; he was not ashamed of it to-day. "Something keeps telling you to run." It was not all he could have said, but it was enough, standing where they stood. "I don't think you ought to come here," he added, hastily and severely, though it was no business of his.

She frowned.

"I wanted to get the better of it. I had another reason, but—that doesn't matter! Besides, I don't feel so much afraid of it to-day; I gave it the most precious thing I had yesterday," and she laughed, remembering that foolish fling of her only gold ornament.

"What do you mean?" He was so taken aback that he was stern.

"My gold bangle." She stared a little at his tone. "If you do that it lets you pass—but, of course, it's only Indian nonsense! Just as it is that you mustn't pick a flower."

"Why not?"

"Because," she had not liked his voice, it sounded as though he despised her childishness, and she looked at him deliberately, "if you do you will give the swamp the most precious thing you have, and not of your own will either. And it's generally——"

"What?"

"You can ask your Indians; they believe in it." She had no idea of telling him what he knew already. "Being half-Indian yourself they will tell you—they wouldn't a white man!"

"Oh, Lord," thought Moulton, "this

is getting it in the neck!" He took a step back from her. "Will you let me explain myself, or not?" he asked, gravely. "It is for you to say."

"I have nothing to do with it," said Miss Kilgore, chillingly. "It does not matter to me particularly who you are. I am glad," not without malice, "to have been able to show you the way out of a mud hole."

"You saved my life," said Moulton, perilously near to losing his temper. "I will tell you that much, even if you don't care to hear it. My only Indian is laid up with a bad leg and can't leave camp; I might have knocked around in that swamp for days, and I'm going to introduce myself on the strength of it, whether it interests you or not. My name's Moulton. And I came by chance on Mrs. Marescaux in trouble and padded her up to your house."

"And spoke in Indian," she finished, calmly. His name meant nothing to her, except that she had sometimes seen it in the papers.

"And made an ass of myself," he assented. "To be honest," the turn of the phrase did not appeal to him, but it was out, "I didn't want to have any neighbors in this place; I was angry when I heard you had built a house on the other lake. But that was before—that was——" hastily, "when I was in—when I did not know," he floundered to a halt, but he felt better all the same. It was out now; he could go to call at the Kilgore's as a decent neighbor should and meet—meet Tita! The thought came like a bullet. He would have to pretend to fall slowly in love with Tita before this girl. He choked down a word that was on his tongue. He would rather have been left to flounder in this swamp forever than go to Molly Kilgore's house bound in all honor to another woman; and a woman he did not love, nor ever would love, as a man loves his mate, or even his friend. "I can only beg of you a thousand pardons," he said, lamely and shortly enough, "and thank you for to-day. If you like coming here," they were all but on his land now, "don't let the thought disturb you that I shall worry



you. I can't expect you to care to be friendly with me. I——" and it was not at all what he meant to say, but it came out. "I picked a flower in that swamp."

If she heard she took no notice.

"Here's where you land," she said:

"Yes," said Mr. Moulton, the ornament of ballrooms; it was the only thing that occurred to him, if it was not brilliant, and instead of looking thankfully at the good, clean hillside before him his eyes turned to Molly Kilgore. For some silly and inexplicable reason the two stood silent, gazing at each other stupidly, as a man and woman gaze who have known one another for years, who cannot understand they have to part. And the man's eyes had in them a depth of darkness that was yet light, a look that Tita Marescaux had never seen there, a look that does not die for one woman while the world lasts.

Molly Kilgore's heart leaped in her like a queen's who comes to her own. The world was suddenly very young, the sky and the trees and the wind off the hillside. Lygon was an ugly dream; Mrs. Marescaux, for all either remembered her, might have been dead and buried.

Moulton's head went up and sideways with the gesture Molly had loved the first day she saw it; his keen face was sweet, oddly boyish.

"Miss Kilgore," he said, "don't you think you and I—we—might make some tea? I'm hungry; and I've a kettle and my lunch that I haven't had over there by the rocks. Would you?" His voice was all at once the voice of a comrade, but in it, too, was a queer reverence the girl's instinct knew for what it was.

"I think," said she, very slowly, "that I'm hungry, too."

## CHAPTER VII.

Mr. Lygon sat fractionally on the shore and refused with bare civility a hint from Mrs. Marescaux to take her

on the lake, and, with no civility whatever, the invitation of Squires to explore a beaver house.

This camping business was not what he had meant it to be. Instead of long golden hours of love-making to the girl whose eyes and shoulders kept him tossing on his bed at nights, his amusements for a fortnight had been conversation with Tita Marescaux, whom he had known from his youth up and had no particular use for, and the society of Squires and Kilgore. Garnett openly despised him. He sat looking blackly and sulkily into the heart of the summer sunset, half ready to make a row.

Kilgore, chewing an unlit cigar on the veranda, was suddenly aware of the set of his young friend's shoulders; and left Mrs. Marescaux unceremoniously. It was odd how much of his time he had taken to spending with that lady—to every one but her.

"What's wrong?" he asked, succinctly.

"How the devil do I know?" Mr. Lygon kicked some moss exactly as he could have kicked the host who had brought him here on false pretenses.

"Well," said Kilgore, just as sharply, "if you don't know your business I can't teach it to you! I suppose you mean Molly's gone off somewhere, as usual." He was angrier with her than with Lygon, but the good streak in him would not let him say so. "You'd better go and look for her if you want her; she's about somewhere. I don't understand the pair of you, if you want the truth."

It was so like the proverbial worm turning that it brought Lygon's sulkiness to a head. He flashed a disagreeable look at Tita, placid in a hammock, and checked something that was on his tongue. He was not only mad for Molly Kilgore herself, but his list of girls with money—and affable fathers—was not extensive.

"I'm easy enough to understand," he said, with an excellently done laugh. "I'm like a bear with a sore head. Don't trouble about me; I'll take a sleep." And without any intention of doing it he moved off in the direction of the back



regions. Something had occurred to him.

Wherever the girl went every afternoon she must start from behind the tents; otherwise he must have seen her. He had learned a little about the woods by this time, and he scrutinized the prospect before him; tall trees, underbrush; and—yes, it was broken bracken! There was a look on Mr. Lygon's face which Mrs. Marescaux might have recognized. He would find Molly Kilgore and break her will to his, once for all; he had done it for various women before now. There should be no more of this shilly-shally, and Garnett laughing at it.

Very slowly he disappeared from view in the direction of the swamp, and, as he saw where his careful tracking was taking him, he smiled. The girl could not have got far, nor would she dare to wait for dusk to come home. He floundered a little, made more noise than Frank Labrador would have considered decent, but he had had from his youth the luck of the devil, and it stuck to him now. He came suddenly on what seemed a faintly-worn path, and, as he sat on a fairly dry stump, a thing that made him jump. Standing up he had seen nothing but the bare stretch of swamp, desolate in the sunset; sitting down a rose-red ribbon had flashed at him from a squat shrub. Once more Mr. Lygon smiled; but he did not stir.

So here was her playground. It was a queer one; but it was a good thing for him that it had amused her to tie sashes on twigs. He knew the ribbon; and knew, too, that wherever she had gone she would come back past it. But all the same he did not light the cigar he held in his hand; she was quite wise enough to scent it and go around him. Over the wide swamp spaces before him there came a light that might have made many a commoner man than he sit in silent pleasure, but it was not the glory of the dying day that lit Lygon's eyes. He liked taming things, and his methods were quick; in a little while he would have Molly Kilgore come to his hand, for the sun was going. He sat

more motionless than he knew, gripping his cigar in his lips, and in a nameless crash something seemed to break clear in his brain. She was coming; and not alone. It was a man's laugh that had gone through him like electricity.

He was wonderfully well made and trained; he could do everything with his body, and silently. As a cat moves he moved to the ribbon that still had the light of the dying sun on it, cut it loose, and stuffed it into his pocket, even while he scanned the place for cover. Off the faint path there was nothing but bay bushes, acrid sweet and breast high; but among their stems lay an old log, primevally old, if he had known or cared. With a curious side-long fling of his beautiful body Lygon jumped and lit on the log; he made a very little noise in his canvas shoes. In another instant he lay flat, out of sight and breathlessly still.

"Something jumped!" said Molly's voice, carrying over the hushed swamp. "Didn't you hear it?"

It was the answer Lygon waited for, and it was long in coming. When it reached him he lifted his head and listened as a cat listens when she cannot understand what she hears; for it was nothing but a queer word that was not English.

"*Adagâle!*" said Moulton, with a little laugh. He was teaching her something every day; in a pure joy he had never known he had for a week ceased to say to himself that he met her each afternoon at his side of the swamp from care for her safety. He was past making reasons, or remembering Tita; he was too busy living.

Molly's voice came nearer to the man on the log.

"It wasn't a bullfrog at all!" she cried. "There, you see, I haven't mistaken one word to-day. Something jumped on dry ground, but I can't see anything." She stopped, just out of eyeshot from the log. "We're nearly home!" she exclaimed, as if she had just waked up to it; she had been thinking of nothing but the sunset, the swamp and the man at her side; and late caution dropped her voice to a deeper clearness. "You

mustn't come any further; not a step. Please go."

"Shan't I chase away the bullfrog?" asked Moulton, teasingly. He was very close to her, and the words reached her ear alone. If he were in a dream, too, he had not waked out of it—yet.

"It wasn't anything," the girl cried. "Please go back. Some one might——" but she stopped, though she had no reason for not being seen except that this was her very own happiness that wanted no on-lookers. She had never spoken about Tita since the day Moulton was bogged, and what he had said then she believed to the letter. Of course, he had been glad to help a woman, especially one he had known slightly. And Lygon she had long ago put out of her head.

Moulton made two steps after her as she moved, and it brought him, all but his face, into Mr. Lygon's eyesight—that fastened on his rough clothes and Indian dark hand.

"*Wellegiskuk tuh sabôwunowagh?*" he said, softly; and the listener would not have believed that all he asked was—"Will it be fine to-morrow?"—because the meaning of the tone leaped to his senses.

"I don't know," Molly answered, uneasily. "I never know. The weather may darken, I may not come. Please go."

Moulton obeyed her.

"*Adiou,*" he said; and she echoed him. It did not need a wise man to know that was good-by.

The lithe and noiseless movement in the bay bushes was swifter than the feet of a girl who walked remembering a happy day. Lygon cut her off deftly at the beginning of the rising ground, and in his smooth face was no sign of the hell of passion and contempt in his mind. The red ribbon was no baby game, but a signal. She went to meet a man in the lonely swamp, day after day; and a man who wore the clothes of a lumberer, who spoke an Indian jargon that she understood; it was for a common half-breed that he had been set aside, flouted, made game of;—had been, not would be! He would take her away from the brute, and treat her

as she deserved for it—afterward. He stepped quietly out of a clump of spruces, and smiled at the terrified surprise of her face.

Tita, dressing her lovely head half an hour afterward, turned around with a start.

"Molly," she cried, "what is it? What's the matter?"

The girl closed the door as noiselessly as she had opened it; stood a silent instant; and then ran to the other woman as a child might to its mother, as perhaps no other feminine thing had ever done to Tita Marescaux.

"Lygon!" she whispered, with a sobbing breath. "He met me; he—I couldn't do anything. He kissed me. He says he's going to tell father, or—or—marry me," her voice broke, shudderingly. "Tita, he kissed me. He's so strong."

Mrs. Marescaux, by main force, looked in her face.

"Tell your father what?" she was frightened. "Sit down; look at me. Tell me what you mean."

"I didn't know what *he* meant till I—— Oh, I clawed away from him. I told him I hated him, and he laughed. And I think—I'm not, I can't be sure—I think there was a bit of red ribbon sticking out of his pocket."

"Be quiet," said Tita, trenchantly; she had never dreamed Molly Kilgore could break down like this. She seized a tiny flask from her dressing table and poured something into a glass. "Drink that; and then talk. Tell me every single thing you mean."

But when the story was out she turned sharply to her glass and stared in her own eyes. Moulton and Molly! Her first thought was possession; Moulton was not to her mind, but he was all she had. Her second was that he had evidently told nothing; and her third made her turn with a little laugh. It was Billy's way to be civil, even to a strange girl; she had heard enough to know there had been no love-making in the newly confessed tea drinkings; he was paving the way to Kilgore's acquaintance—and her!

"I'll settle with Lygon," she said,

superbly. "Don't worry, child; what's a kiss? But let him come out with his half-breed story if he dares," and she laughed again. She had him on the hip if he did.

### CHAPTER VIII.

It was with the cheerful purpose of routing Lygon, horse, foot and guns, that Mrs. Marescaux lingered by her window next morning, watching her chance to get him alone. She was not anxious to have to inform Kilgore that his daughter's supposed half-breed admirer was no such thing, but Billy Moulton and her own property; but neither was she particularly worried lest she should be obliged to; it was one of Rex's little ways to hold threats over the heads of his chosen; a suspended terror was better than a blow any day. Kilgore's face said he had heard no confidences yet; and Tita in the shelter of her cool room yawned, looked at her watch, and polished her finger nails.

Lygon had gone to bathe, Kilgore and Molly were fishing, and she had no desire to join in the desultory conversation of Squires and Garnett on the veranda outside, over a package of letters just come up from Welsh's. There had been none for her; if she were disappointed she did not show it, even alone. All her interest was in her pink finger nails and her polisher. It was a sharp word from Squires that made her forget both.

"Lane! I don't believe it. Not Buff?"

Tita's hands fell in her lap. What didn't he believe?

"It's true," said Garnett. His mincing manner had dropped from him like a garment; she hardly recognized his voice. "My God, why couldn't the woman have telegraphed?—though I couldn't have got there! But to send me, in one envelope, his last scrawl to me, and her own cast-iron platitudes about it—faugh!"

"What could you have done?" Squires' voice was very low.

"Oh, nothing!" was the weary reply. "Can't you see it's not that? Buff's

dead. I can't think of anything else in God's world."

"Buff's dead!" Mrs. Marescaux thought she screamed it, but she did not even form the words. She had a wild impulse to break out into long, loud laughter at this silly joke of Garnett's. Buff dead—who had parted from her strong and laughing—*Buff!* The voices on the veranda went on again, and she was suddenly aware that she was clinging to every word, as if each might be a rope that would hold and lift her out of this sudden hell where everything was cold and foolish.

"Did you know he was ill? I—I'm deadly sorry for you, old chap," Squires muttered, awkwardly.

"Ill? No! I saw there was a letter from the woman, and I thought she wanted me to subscribe to some of her temperance things, and— Here, listen! She calls me 'Dear Mr. Garnett'—because that's the way you begin a note—and she says: 'Her poor Charles—(Charles! And the very waiters in the club thought his name was Buff)'. 'Her poor Charles passed over very suddenly on Sunday last. He had been slightly ailing for a fortnight, and had not thought fit to send for her, as she was away on platform business. There had been no reason to expect the end. She forwards, according to his wish, a note he wrote just before the operation. I will doubtless understand her unfortunate husband's meaning.'"

"What's the note?" blurted Squires, just as if he had been Tita's mouthpiece; Tita, gray-faced behind her window frame, grown old in a breath.

"A line; a scrawl. Listen!—'Good old Garnett, I wish you were here; it's dull. In case they don't cut me up properly I sent Moulton some papers of mine. I wrote him to read them —'"

"To what?" interrupted Squires.

"Before God," said Garnett, heavily, "I don't know whether it's read them or keep them! I think it's read them. Buff must have been in hell when he wrote. See? He's dropped the pen, and it's blurred all the page. But it must be 'read them,' for he says—'all

that you know of he'll give you; I've settled them. The rest he can deal with.' He dropped the letter fretfully. "I don't want my few hundreds; I'd have given them to his wife if I'd had them, I knew she drained him of every cent. I don't think I was ever so knocked out in my life."

"What's he mean by 'the rest'?" Squires was studying the hardly-written lines.

"Letters," Garnett answered, shortly. "There was some woman; I never knew who she was, except that she was a lady; there's been a Laura and Petrarch business for years. I know Buff kept every line she ever wrote him, and he must have sent them to Moulton when he felt his illness coming on him. He wouldn't leave a scratch in his own house. Mrs. Lane would have published them before he was buried."

"Letters from some woman—a lady—for years!" the words beat like a hammer on Tita's temples. And Moulton was to read them—Moulton.

"He shan't." She stuffed her handkerchief into her mouth to keep from speaking. It was, curiously enough, not the loss of Moulton and his money that the reading would mean that agonized her, but the thought of any man's eyes on those letters she had written to Buff. She tried to think they were perhaps not hers; and could not do it. Buff had never been a woman's man. He had loved her, and been faithful to her; till he died and betrayed her. She could have sprung through the window and seized that note from Garnett just to see for herself what was really written there. Garnett was a fool; he—he could not even read! But she only slipped a little closer to the wide-flung sash to hear more.

"I'm off," said Garnett, succinctly. "I can get there in time for the funeral if I start now. Some one who cares ought to be there."

Tita flung her head up with the torture. The one who cared most must go on polishing her nails, and be gay at lunch.

"Where's Moulton?" Squires asked, gruffly.

"Nobody knows. Gone off on one of his breaks. Lane knew, because he was going to him; I doubt if any one else does. He won't be there. Shout to Kilgore, will you? I can't. I—I'll miss Buff!" His voice broke on it, but all Tita knew was that she got to her door and locked it.

Buff was dead. Garnett was going to see them bury him. There remained herself, who would never be comforted till she died, and she came of long-lived people—herself, and Buff's letters which Moulton was to read, and settle. She sat like an old woman as she tried to think.

Buff was gone, and all the joy of life gone with him. In all the world she had but thirty-four dollars—Joe had had one, and Anna, the maid, five of her forty—Thirty-four dollars, and Moulton and his money. If Buff had lived to comfort her she might have seen the two last go; but now they should never go. Underneath her thoughts came the convulsing agony she must not let master her; she forced herself to sit open-eyed to keep away the vision of other eyes that were always sad over a mouth that always laughed. She would never look on Buff again. She dragged herself back to Moulton and the letters. They were within reach of her, just across the swamp; and she dared not go for them, even if Molly guided her. There was no woman in the world she could fasten those letters on if she went and asked for them. He would know they were hers. There was nothing to be done but wait till they came back to her with the note that would mean poverty, defeat, despair. Nothing! She flung out her hands to the empty room. Surely, surely, there was somewhere a way out! And, with a sharp knowledge that hurt, it flashed on her.

#### CHAPTER IX.

"Molly!" she spoke for the first time, and her stiff lips pained her. "Molly. I'll have the letters to-day." And she thanked God that she had never written

a line in her life—that mattered—to Buff. That she had always used a typewriter.

"You mean——?" said Molly. She was curiously still as Tita went to the window to be sure it was shut.

"I mean he asked me to marry him the night he brought me here. He's cared for me for a long time, and I kept him off—till then. There, you've got all the truth now! I suppose you're judging me, but I tell you that according to my lights I've been a good woman. I loved Buff; and now I've got nothing in the world but Moulton. If he throws me over I've got to die in the gutter, in the end. I'm ruined, Molly! I can't be ruined before my world; I can't. If I get those letters before he reads them, if he never knows they're my letters, he'll go on being happy. He seems happy to you, doesn't he? The night before he asked me to marry him he was hang-dog enough. Can't you like him enough to keep him from seeing me as you see me—a woman who wasn't even true to the man she loved? Can't you save me somehow? I'd do it for you."

"I believe you would," said Molly, slowly. She felt stifled in the close sweetness of the shut room. If she could get out into the air she could think better; she could never think here. Silly sentences kept echoing in her head: "He asked me to marry him the night he brought me here." Well, why not? He had never said a word of love-making to the girl he met every day in the swamp. And—"He seems happy, doesn't he?" Oh, yes, he was happy! It made no difference to any girl that he was happy for another woman's sake; he had never said it was for hers. She stood up with a jerk that was not like her. "I'll get the letters," she said; her voice was very steady. "I'll say they're mine; that's the only way. He won't have opened them, and anyhow, they're typewritten. Don't worry any more, Tita; and," she did not falter on it, "I hope you'll go on being happy, you and he. If you'd told me before, I'd have—but it doesn't matter! You amuse father, and I'll go now. Only——" her composure broke fiercely, "keep Mr. Lygon from follow-

ing me; for if he does I'll let him drown in the swamp sooner than listen to his hateful—to the things he says to me. Promise!"

"I promise." Tita gave a dry sob; now that she had let herself go it was hard to pull up. "But he's out of the way; he went down the lake with Squires and Garnett; I saw him. For God's sake, Molly, don't be long. I don't think I can bear it if you're long. And don't think about Lygon. I told you I'd settle him, and I will."

"You needn't," the girl flashed, passionately. "I'm doing this for you, not for a bargain. And if father turns me out of doors I'll never marry Lygon, nor let him lay a finger on me again while I'm alive. There's only one thing I want to know. Do you like Moulton? I know what you are if you love any one; and I know what you are if you don't. Put away his money, and his position—would you care what happened to him? What he thought of you?" There was something queer in her eyes as she waited for the answer.

"I'd care—yes," Tita replied, very low. And so she would. She had no mind to be despised by the meanest thing on earth, let alone a man like Billy. "I tell you I care," she cried, savagely. "If you're going, go."

And Molly went.

The way had never been so long or so devious before. She found herself toiling through the swamp instead of moving lightly from ribbon to ribbon; sometimes it was with closed eyes that she sought for them. Moulton was Tita's; had been all along. It could not matter what he thought of any girl he had amused himself by meeting when his head was full of a woman. And there was one thing she could do. If he had thought she crossed the swamp for his sake, she could undecieve him. She had only to ask for a dead man's letters to do that.

As she reached the low amphitheatre of rocks where she had been so happy she felt suddenly so exhausted that she sat down and closed her eyes. When she could open them on a world that was decently steady she was aware in

the second that Moulton was not at the trysting place; had not been there all day. Never before had she come so far without his meeting her, never before had the thin blue smoke of his fire failed to greet her; to-day there were the silent woods, a heap of dead ashes. That wrenched the girl's heart, but it steadied her, too. She arose and went quietly up the hill. She had never been to his camp, but she knew where it was; if he had gone away, like Garnett, she would steal the letters. She owed him nothing; nothing at all. And as she thought it she came on him; before she knew it had met his eyes.

"Molly!" cried Moulton, astounded into the name he had never called her. And then he saw her face. "What is the matter? Are you hurt?" He took her sharply by the arm, and she shook herself out of his grasp.

"I'm all right," she muttered; she caught on a bush and dragged on it for support and he saw it. "You weren't at the tea place. I came to look for you. I—you haven't heard?"

"Heard what?" It was not her face alone, but her whole bearing that terrified him; he had never dreamed she could look like this. "You're too tired, this hill's too much for you. Why didn't you wait? You might have known I'd be there. I had to bother with Joe's leg, and it kept me. I'm awfully sorry. Do sit down and rest for a moment; you frighten me."

She could not look at him because his clear eyes hurt her since he was Tita's; but the leaf of the bush she clung to stamped itself on her brain. She had to take her breath carefully before she spoke.

"I thought you mightn't come, if you knew. And I had to see you. Mr. Lane is—Mr. Garnett had a letter from his wife, and he's dead."

"Garnett!" said Moulton, stupidly. "But he isn't married."

"No," she could not help whispering. "Lane."

"Lane!" echoed Moulton, "Lane." His mind went to a hundred things that had puzzled him, and were clear enough now. Lane was dead; and had known

he was going to die. "And you—How did you know?" he cried.

He stood quite motionless as in a few bare sentences she told him, and if he had had any doubts they were gone when she finished. Buff was dead, and Garnett gone to bury him. If he had known this morning he could have gone too; it was too late now. The shock made him feel sick; he wondered dully why it made Molly Kilgore look sick, too.

"You came all this way to tell me?" he began, brokenly; and then the look of her came to him for the second time. This was no kindly messenger. It was a dumb, haggard woman who cared; who had never, while he had known her, spoken the dead man's name. "You knew him," he cried, involuntarily.

She never raised her eyes.

"You have some letters," she muttered, in a thick whisper he would never have known for her voice. "I came for them. I wanted them—before you read them!"

The man's heart turned over. For one mad instant he gazed at her. He had known Lane's wife for one of those women whom committees worship and their own households flee as the plague; known, too, that there had been, somewhere, a comforter for the man whose home was a mockery, his every action a text for a platform sermon; who lived under a system of petty espionage that his friends might guess at, but of which they were never told. But he had never thought of a girl; nor when Lane last week sent him a heavy packet had it dawned on him that it held her letters. He felt a sudden, furious rage that Molly—*Molly!*—should have been mixed up in a thing like this; that her white and golden beauty was only a mask for a soul that knew good and did evil. All he did was to stand and stare.

It sent a fierce pang of joy through her to know what his silence meant. She had hurt him, as Tita and he had hurt her. She could look at him now with steady eyes.

"Will you give me my letters?" she repeated. "You have them; and no one



has any right to them except the woman who wrote them. No one."

"You're right, of course," said Moulton, slowly, his manner instantly and distantly civil. "Though it need not have distressed you, I should not have dreamed of reading or keeping them. I should have burned them at once. But since you want them— Will you wait a few minutes? I will bring them to you now." And even in his anger it hurt him that she nodded because she could not speak.

### CHAPTER X.

He was at his camp and back at a better pace than he knew, but it seemed hours to the girl left standing on the sunny barren. She had not even sense to sit down, and she had time to cool; to realize that the hard part was still before her, and that whatever happened she must not give herself away. He must go on thinking what he thought now. And she prayed dumbly that Tita had made no mistake, and all the letters were in envelopes and typewritten.

Moulton, coming up the hill, saw the color of her face, the hang of her head that had been so high, and was glad that for sheer humanity he had stopped to get his flask. She was so pitifully young; it was not right that she should suffer like this. He would get his part of her pain over and let her go. And the thought made him more agonizedly conscious that he loved her, and that she was Lane's, who was dead. He offered her his cherry brandy in silence, but she only put away his hand as if she were too dazed to care to be better. Her eyes were on the bulky packet he held; a common, brown-paper parcel, sealed and corded.

"Can't you be quick?" she said; it had been too much to ask of any girl. Here under his eyes she was forgetting that he was, and always had been, Tita's; remembering only a mad desire to justify herself. "Give me the letters, and let me go," she cried. For if she had to do it, the sooner she was out

of his sight the better. Moulton dropped his flask on the blueberries. His knife shook as he cut the cord of the parcel, and a miscellaneous mass of letters fell at his feet. Miscellaneous all but one packet of letters, typewritten, common enveloped, that rolled off into the bushes. As he retrieved it in sullen haste the band around it broke, and the letters scattered; but the thing that took the very breath out of him was a sheet of gray paper, written, not typed, that lay flat out on the ground. As he stared at it Molly sprang to seize it.

Tita had forgotten that last letter of all her letters, written in Kilgore's shack where there was no typewriter; in her unmistakable sprawling writing Moulton saw his own name, and Lane's—and knew.

"Molly!" he gasped, but he had the paper crushed in his hand quick as lightning, for she had sprung swift as a wolf. "Do you dare to tell me that's your writing? You can't do it. I know. Before I ever saw you I saw a letter from you to Tita; she showed it to me the night she came to my camp. You can't do it."

With an inarticulate, frightened cry she shrank from him and sank down in the blueberries. It was the first time he had spoken to her of Tita, and he would know now what ailed her. He could beat down her pride as he liked, and for nothing but a broken rubber band. She did not know he was on his knees beside her till she heard his whisper to her:

"How dared you frighten me so, how dared you? Oh, I know all about it, but I love you for it, too! Look at me, Molly. Tell me you care a little, that it hurt you to do it."

The coward's courage that makes women braver than men ran through her body that ached to lean to him; she was not done fighting for Tita yet. She looked straight at him.

"Why should it?" she said, lifelessly. "Tita told me. I said I'd do it. It's Tita you're engaged to; not me."

"What!" said Moulton; he sprang up, sobered. "Now? After this?" There was a queer sound in his voice.



"After what?" she said, steadily. "You asked Tita to marry you, and she said yes" (Moulton opened his lips, and stopped at that). "You had loved her a long time, she told me. And when she said she'd marry you she wrote to him—and told him so; broke it all off. What is there in all that? Couldn't anybody throw any stones at you?"

"You know they could," he said, bluntly. "But—look here, Molly! Do you think I'm going to—oh, I can't talk about it! She sent you here to lie to me, and if that packet hadn't burst I'd have gone to my grave thinking it was yours. I won't have it; I'm going to tell you the truth whether you like it or not. I was madly in love with Mrs. Marescaux once, she's quite right about that; but I hadn't thought of her for months till she turned up at my camp that night. She left in half an hour because I said Lane was coming. I didn't notice it then; but it's clearer now. And then—oh, I'm not going to defend myself; I've behaved like a cad!—then coming up the lake the old obsession, or whatever you like to call it, came over me. I asked her to marry me, and she wouldn't say yes or no. And then in the sunrise I saw you. You can believe it or not, but I've been seeing you ever since. It's you I love; and I don't mean in the way I thought I loved Tita—comrade, friend, everything's in it."

"Except honor." She sat crouched in the bushes, quite motionless.

"I don't know," he returned, recklessly. "Seems to me we're about square. Lane was the best friend I had; Mrs. Marescaux—well, they never even told me they knew one another! I can't do it, Molly; why should I? It isn't as though she cared for me." And his look was at the letters on the ground.

There was no answer. Molly Kilgore was fighting her own battle now; it was she whom he loved, not Tita. The words sang in her head.

"Put it away, dear," pleaded the man, quietly. "I love you, just you. I've been waking up to it ever since the morning I first saw you. I can't hope you care; I seem a pretty contemptible person to care for; but—" he moved

a little farther from her; he would not force her the tiniest atom, but his voice shook in spite of him. "Molly, *aan nigumdach*, can't you do anything but despise me?" And the soft-sounding words that mean "my comrade" caught at her very heart.

"That's the very reason!" she cried. She sprang up and stood facing him. Every inch of her was transfigured till the carriage of her, the soft fire of her eyes were not the girl's he had seen in the sunrise, but a woman's, and a woman's steel supple courage was in her voice. "I do care. And you and I can't stand here making up reasons why you can't marry Tita, because we are the reason. We can't do it."

"Why? It's our life. Everybody else is outside."

"That's it," quickly, "you're putting Tita outside; for me. And do you know what it means to her? She broke down this morning; I never knew she could break down. She loved that man she wrote to, once; she wouldn't marry you before for his sake, though she had begun to care; she didn't give you an answer till she had written to him—was that a crime? It was because she loved you; she said so."

"What?" He remembered how Tita had run from his house at the very thought of Lane. "I don't think so. If she'd cared she would have told me the truth, not sent you to get her letters and lie."

"Can't you understand she was afraid. She couldn't bear you to know. And she didn't send me, I came myself. I've made a mess of it, but that doesn't alter things. You can't know how much I owe Tita. She's never failed me since I've known her, I could never tell you all she's been to me. You see I've never had any other woman be kind to me, and I can't forget it now when she's so horribly poor."

"How do you mean she's poor?"

He had never connected poverty and Tita.

"All her money's spent," Molly replied, simply. "She hasn't fifty dollars in the world."

"But how?"

"I don't know. I only know it's gone."

"If it were only money——" but he stammered over it.

"She wouldn't take it," she cried, fiercely. "You needn't think it's because you have money; if you'd nothing she'd care for you. I asked her."

"Molly," he spoke very slowly. "I can't. Think of you and me."

"That's just what we can't think of. Can you go to her and say you won't marry her on account of those letters, when your real reason is me? You know you can't."

"I can tell her the truth."

"I won't have the truth," she cried out, as if he had hurt her unbearably. "I love Tita, and she trusted me. Can't you see?"

She had not so trusted the man she meant to marry. But he did not say so. He stared before him with hard eyes.

"We can't end things like this," he said.

"I don't think we've much choice," she said, quietly. "Give me the letters; I must go."

Moulton gathered them up with a feeling that it was all nonsense and there never could be an end between Molly and him. Yet if he had to stick to his bargain with Tita this was the last time he would ever walk with Molly Kilgore.

"Come on, then," he said, as if it were any other day.

"No," she cried, shivering. She stood looking at him as if she would take in once for all his blade-keen face, his eyes, the set of his head, back and a little sideways. "I'm—it's good-by."

"And I won't have it," retorted the man. "How can you tell? Tita may——"

"She won't," slowly.

For the first time he touched her, but her wrists were lax in his grasp, and his hands fell.

"If she does," he whispered, standing away from her, "if she gives you to me of her own free will, without my even asking her—will you come to me? Promise me that, and I'll do everything you say."

"Oh, I can promise you that, for I'll never have to keep it," she said, heavily.

She looked at him with a dull longing. Nothing seemed quite right or quite easy, however she looked at it. She could only do what she could. With a fatalism he could not imitate she turned from him, and he knew there was on her lips the farewell she could not say. He stood quite still where she had left him.

For a long time the wind on the lonely barren saw nothing but the bushes and the shifting shadows of the clouds. Then it was aware of a man who sat up where he had flung himself down because the barren was at least lonely; he had no desire for human eyes on him, not even Joe's. He hardly knew what he thought about while his face lay on the warm earth, and he had no thoughts now that he dared think.

He tied up mechanically all that remained of Lane's ill-fated parcel, and as mechanically picked up his discarded flask; it was something even to be moving his hands. He knew quite well the sun would fall out of the sky before Tita let him go; the thing was not like a misdeal at cards, where you could shuffle and have it over again.

He supposed dully that Molly was right, and it was not decent to make use of any knowledge about Tita when his real reason for loathing her was his own unfaithfulness. He stood up and looked about him. He had not known the sun was so low, and a senseless anxiety swept over him, though there was no more reason to fear the swamp for Molly to-day than any other day. Yet he ran down the hill to it, and felt for his field glass as he ran. He was never without it now; it had pleased him to stand and watch her white figure coming nearer, and be on the ribbon path to meet her while she was yet a long way off; he had never thought to use it to watch her go—for good and all.

"Though it's too late now; she must be at home long ago," he thought, as he unslung the glass. He knew he might watch forever before he saw her coming over the swamp again.

And sure enough there was no sign of her. It sent that wave of nameless uneasiness over him again, though she had had time and to spare already. Unconsciously he jerked his head to one side with the gesture she had loved, and it brought the lower end of the swamp into his field of vision, the part she never crossed. He steadied his glass and stared. There, far out in the green, was a white dot; a mile from the marked path. It could never be—Molly! It went this way and that; paused, hurried with a horrible suggestiveness.

"God!" said Moulton, very softly; it was as near as he could come to praying. He marked the white dot; the direction; the distance; the sinking sun, and knew it was not for nothing that he had feared the swamp, the soft treachery of it, the green abysses. It had the only thing he loved in its grasp, just as it had had Ben Christmas and the Frenchwoman's son; she was lost in it, as they had been lost; was—He dropped the glass and ran, cursing himself that he had let her go alone.

As he leaped and plunged and floundered, keeping his course by sheer recklessness, he would have given all he owned to put some foolish words of hers out of his head.

"You picked a flower, so you'll give it the dearest thing you have; and it's generally—" She had not finished, and he filled the sentence in for himself, fiercely.

"Life! I'll have it life. I won't have it her." If he could get her out by dying for her he would bless the God that had made him. He ran on, straight-footed, devouring the way, and once he called her by the word that means both comrade and wife.

"*Nigumâach!*" he shouted. "*Aan nigumâach!*"

Very far off a loon laughed; there was no other answer.

## CHAPTER XI.

On the veranda at Big Lake Teâm Kilgore sat opposite Mrs. Marescaux in uneasy silence.

There had been something wrong all day, and he had tried to put it down to Garnett's bad news and hasty departure, but there was a native shrewdness in him that told him there was more in the air.

Molly had brushed by him after lunch with a look on her face he had never seen there, and when he called to her she ran. Lygon had come back from seeing Garnett off, and had sneaked—there was no other word for it—sneaked off in the bushes when he caught his host's eye. Squires was played out, and had taken to bed instead of drinks and the usual afternoon cards. Mrs. Marescaux—

Kilgore's sharp glance took her in from her pale face to her slim hands, and he was at no loss to see that Mrs. Marescaux was not herself either.

He spoke up suddenly.

"Did Lygon go off with Molly?" He admired Tita for many reasons, but for none of them did he mean her to interfere with Molly's marriage; if she had been restless and unhappy all the afternoon because of Lygon he meant to know it. And before she answered him he did. There was real indifference in her eyes as she turned to him.

"I don't think so. She doesn't like him, Mr. Kilgore."

"Why not?" shortly.

"Well," she said, thoughtfully, "if I go a long way back I think I can realize how he strikes her. There was once a man who wanted to marry me whom I began to hate the very second I knew it. I'd have run miles from him; and I never could run. And even that was not like dealing with Lygon." She had put herself and her biting anxiety out of her mind, and spoke quite truthfully and simply, for here was her chance to keep her promise to Molly. "Let her alone. If she did like him, and sat here waiting to be proposed to, he wouldn't do it. He's a Lygon!"

"Do you mean he wouldn't want her if he could get her?" his heavy face darkened.

"Mr. Kilgore," Tita took a sudden resolution, "suppose you and I speak out. I could help you, if you'll tell me

what you have in your head for Molly."

Kilgore looked at her and nodded. He was a lonely man, in his mind.

"It's like this," he began, haltingly; "you know what I am, and what I came from. Molly's different; her mother was a lady; and I mean her to be a lady, too. Do you suppose I don't see things? She's educated, she's good looking, she's—well, it doesn't matter! But all she gets is, 'Oh, the Kilgore girl!'—and some hard staring. The women I want her to know won't notice her, except you. Then men I can get around her, except Lygon, are——" he shrugged his thick shoulders.

"You mean young Mrs. Lygon would be the—other thing!" assentingly.

"Only—but of course you know."

Kilgore met her candid eyes.

"You mean you don't like him?"

"Oh I like him!"

"Then what?"

"I have myself to care for; I've done it most of my life. When I see who the men are who won't have Rex Lygon in their houses, why"—her rings flashed crimson in her hint of a gesture—"I don't have him in mine! He's a Lygon. It's their way."

"Put it straight," said Kilgore, roughly.

"There's nothing tangible," she said, quietly. "It's none of my business, but I'm fond of Molly. I would like to see her happy; as well as married. If you saw fit to trust me, I think I—could find some one better!" She looked vaguely before her with nobody at all in her mind; but Kilgore gathered, as he was meant to gather, that she knew of better fish in the sea than Lygon. "Don't encourage him," she added, quickly. "I know that kind better than you. And she's dear to you, I know."

She was not prepared for the look on the hard, heavy face.

"That's the reason," the man muttered. "It cut me, last winter. I'd rather she'd be done with me and my kind."

"Then trust me." She held out her cool hand to him impulsively. "Think of it as business, Mr. Kilgore," she

added, swiftly, "and don't buy on a falling market. Society isn't bullish on Lygons—matrimonially."

She had said all she wanted to, and she moved away; but not to her room. She had prayed Molly not to be long, and that was hours ago. Perhaps all Tita had suffered in the long, hot afternoon was put down to her for righteousness; it is not currently supposed that persons who live in hell die to go to it. She walked down toward the swamp edge, and saw the sun was gone; and there was neither sight nor sound of Molly.

"There can't be anything wrong," she thought, feverishly. "He couldn't have suspected; read the letters." She shook off a sick premonition of danger as she had shaken off worse things all day, and turned with a smiling face to a step she heard behind her. It was Lygon; she had not known he was back, and she stood looking at him. He was a mass of mud and water, and his smooth face was as even she had never dreamed his face could be.

"How long have you been back?" she said, calmly, to her eternal credit.

"Long enough," he returned, significantly. "So you're looking out, too!" He laughed, and it frightened her. But he could not know. She assured herself, and she kept on smiling, that he could not know.

"Molly's late," she returned. "I feel anxious."

"I don't." She saw suddenly that he was forcing himself to speak quietly; that he was livid. "If you're thinking about the swamp"—he moved in front of her and stood staring silently. There was no movement anywhere, and out of the north a mass of thunderclouds had arisen. It seemed to soak up the dying daylight as she looked at it; and once more she was senselessly and horribly afraid.

"What do you mean?" she asked, breathlessly.

"I mean a man," he said, blackly. "Do you imagine she's alone out there? Kilgore does. But the charming Molly goes to meet——" If she had been a man she would have knocked him down for his sneer.

"Who?" Her fright half choked her. "A half-breed!" His laugh was venomous. "A common half-breed who can't even speak English. I saw her with him to-day, and other days. Don't look so nervous; she'll probably be back in the morning."

Tita stood back from him. She was suddenly dangerous in her relief that at least he did not know Molly's errand, nor Moulton.

"I always knew you were a devil," she said, slowly. "I never knew you were a liar, too."

Lygon laughed again.

"It's just what I'm not. Look here!" He pulled from his pocket a handful of weather-worn, red ribbons. "These were her little signals; she had them all over the swamp to mark the way to cross it. I gathered them in as I came back to-day. You didn't know I'd gone after her, but she did; she slipped from me like a hare. I told her yesterday that if she crossed the swamp to her friend again I'd be even with her; and I think I am. I'll see what Kilgore thinks when she doesn't come home, and then—I'll see whether I'm to be persuaded into marrying his daughter!"

Mrs. Marescaux, all in one minute, looked like death.

"You used her ribbons to show you the way home, and gathered them up when you were done with them," she said. "Do you know what you are? You——" She wheeled like the wind with the words unspoken; was yards away before he knew it. "Go to Kilgore and tell him all you think," she shrieked over her shoulder. "Go, now and tell him what you've done." She knew what the stolen ribbons meant, and that there was nothing but death for Molly Kilgore; but she would not warn him. If Molly were dead he could hang for murder. Let him incriminate himself as fast as he could. As she ran through the low-lying scrub she snatched a look at the darkling sky, and cried out:

"Frank!"

There was no answer. She forgot all about Lygon, all about Kilgore; she must find Frank Labrador and tell him.

If it was not too late for even Frank Labrador, the son of devils, to find a girl smothering in that black swamp below her. And this night of all nights the Indian was not in his tent.

It was half an hour before she came on him, and in the dark she dragged at his arm. If he had a stupid fit she could never make him understand her, and perhaps he would not go if he did.

"It's Miss Kilgore!" she said. "She's lost in the swamp." She shook so that she could hardly make him hear her, but when he understood, she saw his eyes flash in the gloom. "For God's sake, hurry!" she moaned. But when he moved away she ran after him like a child afraid to be left alone in the dark.

There was no sound in all the camp except the making of dinner in the kitchen. Lygon had vanished; if he were with Kilgore he could stay there. But for Tita, who had sent a girl to death, there was no waiting. She seized a lantern from a tent, lit it, and was at Labrador's heels before he was ten paces into the swamp.

"She'd marked a track with ribbons," she cried into his ear, "and they're gone. She must have strayed. If I carry a light she may see it."

The Indian snatched the lantern.

"We walk too fast!" he said, angrily. "Go home."

But she only caught her skirts to her knees and followed him. Once she spoke, and he hushed her with an up-lifted hand. Time and again he lay down and listened. Far up in the north there was an unceasing shift of lightning, a low mutter of thunder; but nothing else in all the waste.

"Call out, why don't you?" she panted. "Shout!"

For sole answer the man turned on her, and in the sheet lightning pointed dumbly to something that even she knew. They had made no way at all. They had come straight back to where they had started, in a line with the shack.

"Look, see," he said, briefly; and an angry hail came to them from the camp.

"Molly. Where the devil have you been? Come back here."

"You go, tell!" said Labrador, sharply. "I look some more."

And the only answer she made him was to stand like a deer with her head high in the air. Kilgore's voice went over her like a wave, and underneath it something that made her snatch the lantern from the Indian's hand and run; not back into the swamp, but up along the edge of it.

"Molly," she screamed as she ran. "Oh, Molly!" And something answered.

Labrador was past her like a flash, running as she had never thought any man could run. She never knew how she struggled after him, falling, getting up, running, but she did it. And as she fought her way over a bowlder she heard his voice.

"Hold him light! Hold him!"

Mrs. Marescaux, the tears streaming down her face, her breath like a knife in her, answered to the word. Far out in the dark the lightning flicker showed her something, and it was a man who carried a burden. She could have sold her soul to run to him and see that what he carried was alive, but she had been told to hold the light, and she held it, standing still. Along the bank behind her came men running. With her face a mass of smears and scratches, her gown torn off her back, Tita turned and thrust her light into Kilgore's hand.

"Hold the light here if you want to save her!" she cried. "This is Lygon's work, the whole of it. You can settle with him for it afterward." She never knew what told her she must run to Moulton, but she ran.

Kilgore stood dumfounded. He understood nothing at all, but that Molly—his Molly—had gone to the swamp day in and day out to meet a half-breed; and that all the camp seemed to have known but him. He was shaking with fury and pain. Molly; and a half-breed! And a flicker of lightning showed him something that checked his pulses sickeningly.

A man was struggling out of the swamp, carrying something. He laid down the weight, and the look of it startled Kilgore. It could never be Molly who lay like that on the ground.

But it was the lithe shoulders of a half-breed that bent over her, nevertheless. The man groaned with belief of the lie he had just flung in Lygon's face.

And then he had to wait in the dark to get to them; to know if Molly were dead or alive, to—in any case—kill the mongrel who had dared to look at a white woman. He was conscious that Lygon was talking very fast in his ear, but he did not hear the words. And, fifty yards off, Tita had Moulton by the arm.

He flung her away from him.

"You've killed her, between you," he choked on it. He had had time to hear many things in that long battle through the swamp, where each step was like to have been their last. He fell on his knees and caught the girl's cold hands. "My Molly!" he whispered; and thought it was fancy that she stirred a little.

Tita sprang back to his side; dirty, disheveled, and determined.

"Quick," she cried, "is it that? Do you mean it?"

"Can't you wait?" he turned on her savagely. "I know I'm bound to you—and I love her! When she came to me to save you I told her so; and she wouldn't listen. But you can listen. I love her." And, as if the woman he had asked to marry him were an insect that flew in his face, he swept his hand over his eyes and bent over the girl.

For the last time, Tita laid her hand on his shoulder.

"She's only fainted, Billy," she said. "You've saved her. And you needn't worry about me. I give you to her. Lift her when you can and bring her after me."

She knew all in one instant what she must do; if she were beaten she did not show it. She made her way back to Kilgore, standing silent, watching a man carrying his daughter carefully, like a child.

"Who is it?" he said. He dared not ask if she were what she looked; his red face was haggard in the lantern light.

"Her half-breed," commented Lygon, politely; he took the lantern and swung it high.



Kilgore saw nothing but a dark face bent down, ragged clothes, stained hands: the typical half-breed of the border. His passion broke out beyond all bounds.

"Put her down," he shouted. "Damn you, put her down!" He made a furious rush at the man, who had never even seemed to hear him, and felt a hand on his arm.

"Wait," said Tita, gripping him. "Don't you see it's a lie? I told you not to buy on a falling market; keep still and be glad you haven't bought. Lygon to tell you Molly met a half-breed! Lygon! Can't you see who it is? Moulton! You knew he had a camp across the swamp." She had long ago discovered that he and Frank Labrador were the only people who did. "And if it weren't for him we'd never have seen Molly again. Can't you understand? Billy Moulton"—as if he were a baby—"is with Molly."

Kilgore began to stammer.

"Do you mean——"

"I mean she nearly lost her life to-day because Mr. Lygon saw fit to take away the only guide she had in the swamp, and that Moulton saved her. Surely you knew they knew one another! And—can't you see?" she flashed.

And Kilgore saw.

The man had bent his head over Molly, spoken to her, let her slip to her feet with his arm about her; and kept it there.

"Moulton!" said Kilgore, stupidly; he had never thought of flying so high for Molly as Billy Moulton. He moved forward stiffly, and Molly called to him.

"Father! Oh, father, I didn't mean to frighten you."

What Moulton said Tita could not

hear. She stood alone with her torn clothes and the remembrance of her last thirty dollars for sole recompense for this half hour. She supposed dully that Molly would be good to her; but she had no mind for charity. She heard Lygon mumble something about a mistake, and Squires answer him with a comprehensive and unexpurgated opinion of his conduct; heard Kilgore second him with a simple dignity she had not known was in the man.

And then she turned wearily to go home.

As she stumbled through the bushes she felt a hand on her elbow.

"If it hadn't been for you and your lantern we'd never have found her," said Kilgore, thickly. "While I thought that lying devil was right I'd not have let a man stir to look for her, child of mine or not! You needn't think I'll forget it; nobody ever said Jim Kilgore forgot."

The simple kindness finished out the long agony of the day.

Mrs. Marescaux, the exclusive, the fashionable, the tired out, forgot that Kilgore was twice as rich as Moulton, forgot that he was self-made and that a clever woman could improve his manufacture out of all knowledge, and that here was a way out of her troubles that she had, perhaps, once counted on. She collapsed forlornly, and without premeditation, on Kilgore's strong shoulder; and began to cry.

It was six months after that Molly Moulton threw down a letter joyfully.

"Billy," she cried, "Tita has made a heap of money out of that stock father gave her. And—she's going to marry him!"



# A RECRUIT IN DIPLOMACY

By Justus Miles Forman

Author of "The Garden of Lies," "Journeys End," Etc.

"AND then," said young Harrington, impressively, "then the Quarter calls out '11-8-3-29,' or whatever the signal may be, and he chucks you the ball and you make a dive, with three or four chaps pushing you, for a hole in the line that your forwards are making. And if you get through it, eleven great big men pick you up and slam you on the ground, and kick you in the face when no one's looking, and try to kill you. Then you get up and do it all over again."

The girl shivered.

"It sounds very, very brutal," said she.

"Brutal?" considered young Harrington. "Brutal? Oh, I don't know. Of course, one's mother and one's maiden aunts think it's brutal, but—it's a fine game, anyhow," he declared, enthusiastically, and dropped back in his deck chair, a little fatigued with so much explanation of a thing that everybody knows about. But the girl shook an unconvinced head.

"It seems to me," she insisted, in her quaint, careful English, "a very strange and barbaric way of—of upholding the honor of one's university."

"Well, if you should ask me," cried young Harrington, sitting up to battle, "I call it quite as civilized as getting yourself up in a silly stuffed diver's suit and a French *chauffeur's* goggles, and letting another man slash at your nose and cheeks with a silly *schläger*! I'd rather break a collar bone or two with twenty-five thousand people looking at me and tacking my name on the end of a 'varsity cheer, than go through life with a face that would make people wonder whether I'd been in an explosion

or had had a mix-up in a barroom." He rose to his feet and stood over the girl, balancing himself to the roll of the ship, and frowning down upon her with pretended severity.

"You Germans are doubtless a very estimable people," said he, "and I'm not saying that you aren't fine gymnasts and mountain climbers—and I'm not saying that you haven't jolly good beer, either; but you will never be a proper nation, you know, till you learn to play football."

He tucked the plaid rug more snugly about her feet, and strolled off down the deck toward the smoke-room, aft.

He wished that he might have stopped longer, but he was greatly afraid of boring the girl, and would not allow himself to risk it. She always seemed glad enough to have him drop down in the vacant chair next hers—indeed, of late, she had seemed even to welcome him with a certain little eagerness; but, on the other hand, he often discovered, while he was in the midst of a story, that the girl's eyes were turned away from him, out over the swaying water, and that she was obviously *distracted* and occupied with something far beyond him.

Of course, this always drove him away at once, and reduced him to sitting in a corner of the smoke-room and calling himself names; but it seemed unable to keep him away from the girl for any long stretch of time.

She was not very pretty—certainly not beautiful, after the Anglo-Saxon's standard—though she had surprisingly fine gray eyes and magnificent hair, but there was about her a certain atmosphere, a wholly unconscious air of dis-

tion, which made her conspicuous among the many sorts of women on board the ship, and seemed to hold her in a measure aloof from them. An older and more experienced man than young Harrington would have noted this air and have given it more significance. Young Harrington merely approved of it in a vague fashion, and said to himself, in the language of a certain London music-hall song, that the girl was very evidently "class."

Further, there was something hauntingly familiar about her face, but so vague and faint that it baffled him quite. As a matter of fact, her face might have been familiar to almost any one who read the European illustrated prints, or frequented the photograph shops. Of course, young Harrington could not be expected to know this, though.

He let himself into the smoke-room, which was very cozily broken up into corners and angles and recesses, so that one might be quite alone even with a dozen or a score of other men in the room. He chose an unoccupied corner and stowed himself away in it with his pipe and a brandy and soda. A little heap of newspapers—a *Paris-New York Herald*, a *Temps*, a *London Daily Telegraph*, a *Gaulois*, and a *Neue Freie Presse*, lay scattered upon the leather seat near, and he pulled them toward him, remembering that Austrian mix-up which had been filling every one's attention just before he left Paris to join the ship at Boulogne—it was a Dutch steamer sailing from Rotterdam.

He found it given a generous amount of space—the illness of the Emperor, the old fear of a dismemberment of the empire, in the event of the Emperor's death, the quarrel with Franz Ferdinand, and the rumors that the long-banished archduke, the famous Johann Orth, was really not dead at all, but was living somewhere in America, and that he was to be sent for. Young Harrington knew very little about Austrian politics, and cared no more. He let the journal slip from his knees to the floor unnoticed, and his mind went back to the German girl with the fine eyes and the little air of hauteur which had

kept every one but himself at such a distance.

A man strolling lazily through the smoke-room peered into the secluded corner, and at young Harrington's nod and smile, dropped down in a chair across the little table. It was the Swiss lieutenant, Kärstelen, with whom young Harrington had often walked the deck, and of whom he highly approved. It is impossible that one should play four years of Yale football, the last of them as captain of one's team, without being able to form a quick and rather accurate judgment of men—in respect, at least, to their executive ability. Young Harrington looked at the Swiss lieutenant's gray eyes with their trick of turning all at once hard and cold and steady, and at the set of his jaws and at the line of his mouth, and picked him for a man who would play a hard and aggressive game from the kick-off, and would be playing a harder game at the end of the second half than in the beginning. He liked the man's quiet alertness and the air of perfect adequacy which hung over him, and made one certain that he would prove quite equal to any occasion. It was because the Swiss was the type of man he most admired that he had tried to see as much of him as possible since the beginning of their smoke-room acquaintance, and he was very glad, at this moment, to have him happen in.

"Fine day!" said he, originally. "What'll you have? Gin, steward, gin, dry!"

"It is not a fine day," objected the Swiss lieutenant. He spoke perfect English with an excess of care and with occasional strange idioms. "There is too much sea," he complained, "and I am a bad sailor. If this goes on I shall probably be ill. It takes the—the powder out of one."

He lifted one of the old newspapers idly, and looked at its first page.

"Nothing but the Austrian affair," he said, with a little yawn. "Austria-Hungary is a sort of bomb with a time-fuse—the time uncertain. When it explodes the bits will be gratefully picked up by several people, but they will not be put together again."

Young Harrington laughed. "I know very little about Austrian affairs," said he. "I suppose there will be a smash when the old Emperor dies, won't there? D'you suppose this archduke chap, Johann, is really alive? I thought he disappeared ten or fifteen years ago."

The Swiss lieutenant struck a match and lighted a cigar which he drew from a little glass tube.

"Johann was supposed to have been lost at sea," he said presently, "rounding Cape Horn, on board a chartered ship with the woman he married against the Emperor's wishes. There have been rumors ever since that he is living in one place or another, incognito, of course. It may be. I cannot say."

"Well," said young Harrington, "it's no good pretending that I care whether he is alive or not, for I don't. All I care about for the present is making these next three days go, somehow. Being at sea is a great bore. There's nothing to do but walk or sit about. You couldn't get up a bit of excitement, could you, just for my sake?"

The Swiss lieutenant smoked in silence for a long time with the gray eyes fixed upon young Harrington's face. The eyes were narrowed a bit and he did not smile. Then, at last, he leaned forward, with his arms upon the little table, and his eyes still fixed very keenly upon the younger man.

"I have been in America already three times," he said, "and I have watched the American customs and the American universities—even their sports. I know what it means to play your football—the training, the work, the endurance, the judgment. I have known old men of affairs, bankers, advocates—what you will, who would offer a coveted place in their office or their counting-room to one of your football heroes because they felt that the boy had received a very valuable training in—initiative, in—grit, in judgment of men. It seems strange, but it is so. Yes?"

Young Harrington colored a little and gave an embarrassed laugh.

"Oh, yes," said he. "Yes, I suppose so. Yes, I've known it to be done. Why?" He looked back at the Swiss

with puzzled eyes. There was a certain gravity in the other man's manner which he did not at all understand.

"There is something to be done," said the Swiss lieutenant, after another pause, and looking away, "something of importance which I must do before this voyage is over. I should like the help of such a man as you are. The ordinary man is out of the question. You have been trained to be cool and swift in danger and to have no nerves. I should like your help."

"What the devil——" cried young Harrington, softly, "what the devil can you find of that sort on board a transatlantic liner? What are you going to do?" He gave a little, amazed, scoffing laugh, as if he thought the other man was poking some grave joke at him. But the Swiss lieutenant's face did not relax.

"You know something of men," said he. "Am I a common thief? Would you pick me out for the sort to rob a fellow passenger of his watch or his pocketbook?"

Young Harrington laughed again.

"No," said he, "no, you are no common thief. I know very little of men, but I know enough for that. What then?"

"This," said the Swiss lieutenant. "I shall be a thief before the voyage is over. There is on board ship, a la—a passenger who bears certain documents from—from some conspirators in the South of Europe to agents in America. These documents must never be delivered. If they reach their destination, incalculable harm will be done to a whole nation, perhaps to all of Europe. Do you understand? I must steal them. They cannot be seized openly, for the affair must not be known. There are officers of the secret service watching every west-bound ship. I was detailed to this vessel, and to me the prize falls—the prize with its grave responsibility. I must not fail."

He paused a moment to relight his cigar, and young Harrington noted that his fingers shook a little and that his strong face was a bit pale.

"I must not fail," he said again. "I

cannot explain to you the importance of the thing, because you know nothing of the circumstances."

He ceased speaking once more, and his gray eyes, a bit brighter than usual, glittering with a certain new excitement, challenged the man across the table.

Young Harrington twisted uneasily in his chair, and scowled into the eyes that held him.

"Why, Lord bless you!" he cried, irritably. "Do you realize what you're asking of me? Do you? Do you realize that you're asking me to steal, *steal* like any beggarly sneak thief, from some chap who's never done me any harm? What possible excuse have I? I don't know anything about your political mix-ups. I've nothing to do with them. It may be all right for you to search a fellow passenger's luggage and get away with his papers, but— Oh, I say!" He colored again and gave a little embarrassed laugh.

"How do I know this is—is all right?" he demanded. "How do I know that you're not after somebody's bonds? What right have I to take your word and commit a crime by it? Oh, nonsense!" He took a long gulp of his brandy and soda, and looked up once more at the man across the table, still with his little, embarrassed, deprecatory laugh.

The Swiss lieutenant dropped back in his chair with a quick sigh.

"I am sorry," said he. "Yet, you are quite right; it is absurd. You have no right to commit a crime with only my word to go upon. I beg your pardon. It was your asking for a bit of excitement that led me to speak; that and what I knew of you, and my desperate need for a cool, steady head to help me. I must do the thing alone, even if I am caught. What is about to happen must never happen. To prevent it is worth many times my life."

He shook his head at the younger man with a little, wistful, apologetic smile. "You are quite right," he repeated. "I was mad to suggest such a thing to you. Again I ask your pardon."

Young Harrington set his elbows upon the little table, leaning over upon them, and his eyes, like those of the other man, had narrowed and become very hard and keen and bright.

"I told you a moment ago," said he, "that I knew little of men, and that is true. You may be contemplating a perfectly ordinary bit of robbery for which you need an accomplice, but I think not. If this thing is as you say, it is much more important than one young man's scruples and suspicions. If it is as you say and I'd refused to go into it with you, I'd have a pleasant thing to look back upon, wouldn't I? I'd be proud of myself, wouldn't I? Will you tell me a bit more? Will you try to explain? What is there that I can do?"

The Swiss lieutenant leaned forward eagerly, and spoke without pausing for nearly half an hour, while young Harrington smoked and listened and nodded his head.

When the younger man at length arose and made his way out to the wind-swept deck, there was a slight flush on his cheeks and a singular brightness in his eyes. Just inside the door which opened upon the starboard promenade, he passed three of his casual smoke-room acquaintances seated about a table, and playing pinochle. They called to him cheerily, and Holzmann, the stout German, tried to pull him down in the vacant chair to make a fourth at the game, but young Harrington shook his head, laughing, and said that he wanted a bit of good fresh air out on deck. He stood a few moments chaffing with the jolly old German and with De Vries, the Belgian diamond merchant, but he was uncomfortably conscious of the fact that the third man, Baron Friedman, was sitting back in the shadow and watching him very keenly. He wondered why. He had never greatly cared to cultivate the baron. The man had a rather coldly repellent air and the keenest eyes that he had ever seen in any human being.

He broke away at last and went out to the promenade deck, where he walked up and down for a long time.

"I'll do it, by Jove!" he cried, under his breath, and he said the words over

and over to himself many times, as if the sound of them gave him a certain courage. "He may be a liar and a common thief, and I may be a common dupe, but I don't believe it. By Jove! I'll do it! The whole thing's outrageous, but Kärstelen's too much in earnest to be faking. What if it should be true and the whole thing went to pot for lack of my help? I've got to do it!"

It was, as he said, outrageous, the whole affair, and a man of greater age and experience would have laughed at it, or at once told the purser that the ship's company contained a dangerous thief, but it must be remembered that young Harrington was very young indeed—only a year out of his university, and that, like all very young men, he greatly prided himself upon his judgment of character. Also the very preposterous daring of the thing, the melodramatic romance of it, appealed to him strongly.

"I'll do it!" he said once more, with a little nod of decision, and went up forward to where the German girl with the fine eyes still lay, wrapped up, in her long deck chair.

It was eleven o'clock the next morning when young Harrington and Lieutenant Kärstelen stood together in one of the corridors down on the saloon deck, forward. The deck was so arranged that there were two long passageways, starboard and port, with occasional transverse connections. But from the crosswise connecting passage farthest forward, a little spur ran out toward the bow, with four staterooms opening upon it. The portholes from the extreme two opened in the forward bulkhead of the deck house, looking down upon the second-class deck and the bow of the ship. It will be seen that these cabins were peculiarly isolated.

"Now is our time," said the Swiss lieutenant. "Inspection has already taken place, and the people from all four of these rooms are out on deck or in the saloons. The stewardess who is assigned to this part of the ship is safe for half an hour. A passenger very carelessly stepped upon the edge of her skirt, in the main companionway, a mo-

ment ago, and tore it so badly that the woman has had to go to her own quarters for repairs. I was the passenger. Now, you know what you are to do. You will stop, at any cost, any one attempting to enter this little spur passage, and you will do it with sufficient noise to attract my attention. Never mind how it is effected. You may have a fit on the floor if you like—anything to keep people away. Are you ready? By the way, the room I shall be in is the extreme one to the left, number eighty-four."

"All ready," said young Harrington. "Never you fear, I'll keep the coast clear. Remember, though, I'm to see the documents afterward. That is only right and proper."

"Yes, yes!" said the other, impatiently. "You shall see them—read them, if you like, and if you can. At any rate, you shall make certain that they have nothing to do with money, and, if you like, you can search my clothes to be sure I have not picked up a diamond necklace or two. We will go at once to my stateroom when I've the papers. Now, then!"

He slipped noiselessly back into the passage, and unhooked the door of the stateroom numbered eighty-four. Young Harrington drew a quick little sigh, as one who braces his nerves for a strain. He had taken a stiff brandy, neat, just before coming below, not that he was in the way of relying upon artificial means to meet a crisis, but, as the time had drawn near, he had begun to realize that his nerves were in a most absurd condition of irritability. He could face an opposing football team before twenty-five thousand people with never a tremor, but this work was quite new to him. He had noticed that Kärstelen also had been seeking courage from a bottle, but the Swiss was on the verge of seasickness and needed some aid.

He moved out of the spur passage a bit, and stood in the transverse corridor, very cool and alert and ready. He heard people stirring about in nearby cabins. He heard voices come up the long passages from the companionway amidships. Once his heart beat fast



when some one came almost to the end of the corridor in which he stood, and he dropped weakly back against the wall when the passenger entered a room safely out of sight.

It seemed to him that he stood there many hours, straining his ears for a footstep which would mean danger, clinching his hands at his sides to keep them still. He had made several plans of action in case some one should attempt to pass him, and he was quite ready to employ even the most desperate of them, for he meant, at any cost, to do his share of the work faithfully, but this waiting was rapidly driving him into a nervous panic.

The chief, coherent thought in his mind was an increasing anger at Kärstelen for being so long. Of course, young Harrington realized that the time which actually passed was much shorter than it seemed, but he was certain that at least a quarter of an hour had gone by—which was not so—and that he was almost at the limit of endurance.

Then, in the midst of his anger and impatience and nervous strain, something came to pull him up sharply and quiet his nerves to action. Some one was walking along the starboard passageway between the two rows of cabins—some woman, for Harrington could hear her singing softly to herself as she came. He had, from the first moment, a queer sense of absolute certainty that she was making for the spur passage.

He moved a little to starboard of the spur and stood waiting. When the woman turned the corner he was down on one knee in the narrow corridor, adjusting a bootlace. He seemed not to see that he was in the way until the woman had paused a moment and waited, and at last had spoken.

"Oh, I—I beg pardon!" cried young Harrington, starting up. "I didn't see you—very stupid of me." He caught his breath sharply as he saw the woman's face. It was the young German girl with the fine eyes. "Very stupid of me!" he repeated. "I—was waiting for a friend who's in—in his cabin over on the port side," he explained. He stood very determinedly in the way so

that the girl could not pass, and she smiled at him, half in amusement, because she mistook his attitude and his eagerness of speech for a tribute to her personal charms, as any woman might have done. So they stood for a little, chatting about quite ordinary shipboard topics, until young Harrington was interrupted by an easy apologetic voice behind him and a hand on his arm.

"I beg pardon," said the other man. "May I pass? Thank you!" Young Harrington stepped aside with a breath of relief, and Lieutenant Kärstelen passed them, touching his soft cap to the girl.

But when he had disappeared around the corner, the German girl gave a little murmured exclamation of surprise and—it seemed to Harrington—concern.

"Who is that man?" she asked, quickly. "Do you know who he is? What can he have been doing here in this passage? I am almost certain that all the occupants of those four rooms are women."

"Those four rooms?" said young Harrington, in a queer voice. "Do you mean that you are quartered in one of those four rooms?"

"Why, of course," she said, impatiently. "My room is number eighty-four. What can he have been doing there? Perhaps he was taking something to one of the other women. I wonder—"

Young Harrington stood shaking and dumb against the white painted bulkhead. He knew that his face must be ghastly white, for it felt cold and damp; and the blood surged and beat terribly in his head and below his ears and at his wrists. If the corridor had not been half dark, as all corridors on board ship are apt to be, the girl must have noticed that something was wrong, but she was looking after Lieutenant Kärstelen, and, it seemed, taken up with her own thoughts.

Young Harrington heard a strange second self, as if from a very great distance, making ordinary and trifling remarks, and the phenomenon interested him somewhat, but only for a moment. His real being was in a storm and whirl

of terrified dismay, of a dread which bound him, for the moment, cold and helpless. But always that curious second self babbled meaninglessly, with desperate lips, to the young German girl, and the girl answered, as much at random as young Harrington spoke, but she moved nearer to the little spur passage, and he could see that her eyes were troubled and anxious.

When she had left him, disappearing into room eighty-four, young Harrington moved away down the corridor. He meant to go at once after Lieutenant Kärstelen—follow the man to his room, and there take him by the throat and demand back what had been stolen. It was impossible that the thing should be as the Swiss had said. It was impossible that this young girl should be carrying such documents, on such a mission. The papers were probably bonds, private documents, something with which a thief might levy blackmail.

He found himself standing in the starboard companionway amidships, and staring out upon the promenade deck with wide eyes that saw nothing. He had no notion of how he came there, or why. He even did not see his three pinochle-playing friends of the smoke-room march past, arm in arm, and peer curiously at his white face.

A rush of footsteps behind him brought him to himself. It was the young German girl with the fine eyes, but the fine eyes were wide and dark with terror now, and her face was as white as young Harrington's own. She was gasping for breath as if she had run a long way, and the hand that caught at young Harrington's arm shook most strangely.

"Mr.—Harrington!" she cried. "Mr.—Harrington!—My—my papers! The man coming from my room—he was a—thief! Did you see his face? Would you know him again? Oh, call Colonel von Alt—I mean Baron Friedman! Call him at once! Will you bring him to me, please? Please! Ah, be quick!" A little break came into her voice and the hand on young Harrington's arm shook again. Just at this moment the three pinochle players of the smoke-

room came once more marching past, arm in arm, but when they saw the German girl and young Harrington standing together in the companionway, they halted at once, and came forward with suddenly grave, anxious faces.

The young German girl put out her arms toward them with a little low, sobbing cry.

"Oh, colonel, colonel!" she cried to Baron Friedman, "the papers! They are gone—stolen! A man was coming from my stateroom when I went down, just now. This gentleman saw him. Oh, colonel, the papers, the papers!"

Even in the midst of his amazement and dismay and shock, young Harrington noted with a sort of wondering admiration the bearing of the man who called himself Baron Friedman. He noted how immediately the man appeared to take command of the situation, and how the others waited for his word.

"Never fear, madam!" said he. "We'll have the papers back in half an hour. The thief cannot leave the ship. At the very worst, I still have the copies. Never fear, we'll have them back!" He laid his hand upon the girl's arm for an instant, with his grave smile, and young Harrington watched the worn, still face, and felt somehow soothed—assured. It never occurred to him to doubt what the man said. He was one of those strong, silent men whose words carry conviction.

Then the boy, even though he was very young and very foolish, showed that he was also a thoroughbred, for he became all at once cool and alert and steady at the need.

"This lady is right!" he said, swiftly. "She has been robbed of certain papers by a passenger who calls himself Lieutenant Kärstelen, late of the Swiss Service. I helped him steal the things. I stood guard for him. He had lied to me, I think, about the nature of the documents. I can help you to recover them." He looked into Baron Friedman's keen eyes, and his jaw squared itself a trifle, for he was beginning to grow angry at the deception which had been played upon him.

"Will you come into the smoke-room a moment?" he asked. "As you say, the man cannot escape. A half-hour's delay will do no harm. We must plan the recovery of those papers. It will not be easy."

Baron Friedman turned once more to the girl, who was staring with a sort of amazed horror at young Mr. Harrington.

"I would advise you, madam," said he, "to go back to your stateroom. Here comes the countess. She will go with you. We shall have the papers in an hour, I think, and you shall know the moment we have them."

The elderly woman with the green veil, who sat by the girl's side at table and on deck, came up to the group, and Baron Friedman spoke to her in a low tone. Then the four men bowed and went quickly aft to the smoke-room.

"Now," said young Harrington, settling down behind his corner table with a little sigh, "now, for Heaven's sake, explain! What is the nature of those papers? No, wait! Let me tell you Kärstelen's story." And he went quickly over the tale as he had had it from the Swiss lieutenant. There were little murmurs of anger or of amazement from the other two men, but Baron Friedman listened in silence, nodding his head from time to time, never stirring his eyes from those of the boy across the table. And when young Harrington had finished, he was silent for a short time, as if he were considering how he would best reply.

"You are a very rash young man," he said at last. "You must see that you have been a very rash young man, and you will see how rash when I tell you something of what you have done; but I believe you are well-meaning. I am certain of that. Such an enterprise as was offered you might tempt any one whose experience had not been—had not been wide." He leaned forward across the little table, resting his arms upon it, and his eyes held those of the younger man with a force almost hypnotic.

"I am forced to allow you," he said, "a share in a certain state secret of very grave importance. In the first place I

may as well tell you that my name is not Baron Friedman; it is Colonel von Altdorf, and I am in the service of the Austrian Emperor."

Young Harrington gave a low cry of amazement.

"Colonel von Altdorf?" said he, "Colonel von Altdorf? Why, I know all about you. I've heard of you by the hour from Denis Mallory and from Mrs. Mallory, who was the Princess Eleanor of Novodnia. Colonel von Altdorf!"

The other man's eye lighted a bit.

"I am glad that you are a friend of Denis Mallory," said he. "It makes you a friend of mine. We must talk of him, later. He is a great man. Now, to our business! The lady with whom you have talked on deck and at dinner is the Princess Beatrice Amélie, the Archduchess Victoria's only child, and the Emperor's niece."

"Oh, my God!" said young Harrington, softly, and stared with wide eyes at the other man. The awfulness of the thing he had done began in a vague, dim fashion to reach his mind—sent a wave of inward sickness over him.

"She is bearing," continued Colonel von Altdorf, steadily, "documents—personal letters from the Emperor, state dispatches, outlines of policy, matters of the utmost import and secrecy, to the Archduke Johann, who is not dead, as people have supposed without proof, but living incognito in your city of Baltimore. You have read, before leaving Paris, what the journals said of the Emperor's weakness of health, and of the quarrel with Franz Ferdinand? Yes? Very good. The princess is relied upon to bring the archduke home to Austria. No one living save herself or the Emperor could succeed. That is why she goes, and the reason for her going secretly is that the documents which you helped to steal must not be lost. We knew that there was danger, for the Bohemian party would do anything in the world—commit any crime, rather than allow those papers to reach Johann. Also they would commit any crime to learn what the papers contain. We thought we were safe on this ship. We thought we had eluded the pursuit

which we knew was afoot. That is why we were not more careful about the papers. I shall never forgive myself. The man who calls himself Kärstelen is, I think, a Bohemian named Szakvary. He is almost the only one of their agents whose face I do not know. Well, he has the papers, but we must have them back or Szakvary must not leave the ship alive."

Colonel von Altdorf's face flushed a little and he brought the palm of his hand sharply down upon the table.

"I tell you!" he cried, in a low, tense voice, "rather than allow those documents to go ashore and at large in Szakvary's or any one's hands but ours, I will burn this ship with every one on board, or I will kill that Bohemian with my hands, if by so doing I can regain the Emperor's papers."

He was very terribly in earnest, and no one, however light minded, would have dreamed of doubting his word. Colonel von Altdorf was not the sort of man to be doubted.

Young Harrington sat back in his chair and pressed a shaking hand over his eyes. It felt cold and damp, and his forehead also was damp with perspiration.

The inward sickness swept over him in waves like an attack of nausea as the full realization of what he had done pressed deeper and deeper and more unrelentingly into his brain.

"I—can't make it seem—real!" he said, in a dull tone. "It *can't* be real! Good God, such things don't happen nowadays on an ordinary prosaic Atlantic liner. It's a—a play—a melodrama. It's some damned dream that's got hold on me. I'll wake up presently and everything will be all right. I tell you, it *can't* be true. It *can't*!" His voice shook and ran up into a queer, high falsetto.

Colonel von Altdorf spoke quietly over his shoulder to a passing steward, and the steward set a glass of brandy upon the table and moved away again. Young Harrington gulped the spirit at a swallow and sat up shivering.

"Come!" he said, fiercely. "Come! For God's sake what are we sitting here

for? Every minute we wait, that black-guard is reading another page of those papers. Come!" But Colonel von Altdorf put out a hand upon the boy's arm and looked into his eyes.

"We shall go to the man's room," he said, gently, "and you will enter alone, because he will not be suspicious of you. It may be that you can take the papers from him, single handed; if not, we shall be outside the door ready to help." He paused a moment, watching the other's face.

"Remember," he said. "Your failure may mean a repainting of the map of Europe when the Emperor dies." He seemed to see something in the boy's face to please him, for he drew a little sigh that might have been satisfaction, and nodded his gray head.

Down below in the narrow corridor between outer and inner staterooms, the three men of Princess Beatrice Amélie's suite halted, and young Harrington alone rapped upon the closed door of room number one hundred and two. There was a slight crease between young Harrington's brows, and a certain extra squareness about his jaw which foreboded no particular good to Lieutenant Kärstelen of the Swiss Service, alias Szakvary, Bohemian spy.

"Who is there?" came a voice from inside the room, a low voice not too steady. "You cannot come in. I am dressing."

"Open the door at once!" said young Harrington, his lips to the crack. "It is I, and there is danger. Open at once!"

The door swung open upon Lieutenant Kärstelen, coatless and pale, but very bright of eyes.

"What is it? What is it?" he whispered, sharply. "Have they missed the papers? What have you heard?" He pulled the young man into the little room and bolted the door behind him.

"What is it?" he demanded once more. "Has the girl missed her papers? Lord, what a close call that was!"

"Yes, she has!" said young Harrington, irritably. "At least, she's tearing about the ship in hysterics or something like. Why the deuce didn't you tell me

it was she who had the papers? Who is she, anyhow?"

"Who is she?" cried the other man, and turned upon him amazedly. "Why, she's Bea—oh, she's a—she's a German girl, a—an agent, you know. They thought the things would be safer with her than with a man, I expect."

"Well," said young Harrington, "let's have a look at the papers. I want to be sure that they have nothing to do with money, you know; then I'll go up on deck and see what is being done."

But the other man had turned partly away again.

"Oh, my word is good enough, without seeing them, isn't it?" he said, lightly.

"I'd rather be quite certain," said young Harrington. "I owe it to my conscience, as you might say," he explained.

The other faced him again, his brows a bit drawn.

"You can't see them," said he. "I have not even had a chance to look at them yet, myself. That cursed steward was here in the room when I returned. He went out just before you came in."

Young Harrington set his back against the door and smiled. There are many sorts of smiles.

"Can't see them?" said he, gently. "Oh, yes, I'd best see them, I think. You promised, you know."

"You can't see them," repeated the other man, doggedly. "It's enough to know that they're safe, isn't it? They can do no harm now. I tell you," he cried, and his voice shook a little, nervously, so that Harrington saw under what a strain the man had been, "I tell you, it is all right! Anyhow, you can't see them, and that is all there is of it. They are put away."

"Best give them to me—Szakvary," said young Harrington, smiling again. The Bohemian dropped back against the closed wash-hand stand with a queer choking noise in the throat, and, for an instant, his hands shook beside him. Then he drew a long breath and was quite himself again.

"Ah!" said he, regarding the young

man before him with a certain new interest. "Ah, so you are in the game, too, my friend. You have played very stupidly. You lose."

"Oh, no," said young Harrington, cheerfully. "Dear me, no! I win. Give me the papers, Szakvary, or I'll illtreat you dreadfully. I'm such a lot bigger than you are! Give 'em up. You will never land with them, you know."

The Bohemian had moved gradually—so gradually that his movement was imperceptible, across the tiny room till he was close against the edge of the lower bunk. Then the hand which was behind him made a sudden swift dive toward the pillow there, and he was holding a small and neat American revolver so that young Harrington could look accurately down its rifled barrel. Young Harrington laughed.

"Oh, bless you!" said he, "I'm not the least bit afraid of that. D'you think I'd be afraid of your firing that thing? Why, you'd have about five hundred people here in thirty seconds! Put it down."

The pistol's muzzle wavered and dropped. The man holding it appeared to give some consideration to what young Harrington had said. After a moment he slid it into one of his hip pockets, but from the same pocket he drew a very large clasp knife, and before the other man had clearly seen it, opened the blade. The younger man laughed again.

"Anything else?" he inquired, humorously. "Bring 'em all out! Let's have a look at the whole arsenal." Then, all at once, he ceased laughing and drew back a step, for he had caught the gleam of the Bohemian's eye, and saw that the man meant murder. It came to him with a sort of shock, for he had supposed that Szakvary's bellicose preparations were the purest bluff, and that the man would not dare to kill or wound him.

Once, a number of years before, he had had almost exactly the same shock with its accompanying sense of amazed injury, of outrage. It was in a football game, and the man playing opposite

him had tried to put him out of the game by hitting him on the point of the jaw with his fist, as the two lines crouched down for the play to begin.

He was inexperienced in those days, and though he had heard of foul play, had never actually seen so flagrant a case of it.

Now, as at that other time, the thing roused murder in him. He bent a little forward, as the other man moved toward him, and waited, swinging from side to side. It was unfortunate for the Bohemian that he knew little of wrestling. He had no chance. He saw and felt nothing but a sudden whirlwind of small dimensions, and when the whirlwind had passed by, he lay, half on the floor, half against the red plush seat under the porthole, with the life nearly crushed from his bruised body; and young Harrington's strong hands were twitching at his throat.

"You'd stab me, would you?" said young Harrington. "You damned blackguard! You'd stab me, after I helped you to do your contemptible work!"

He held the man's throat with one hand, and slipped the other inside the loosened waistcoat. The Bohemian struggled feebly, but young Harrington drew out a thick packet of documents bound together with tape. The tape was fastened in many places with great waxen seals and these seals had not yet been broken.

"Not broken, by Jove!" he cried, with a little high-pitched laugh of relief. "Not broken!" He stuffed the papers into a pocket of his jacket, and arose to his feet, backing away toward the middle of the room.

The Bohemian spy, lying helpless against the edge of the red plush seat, turned slowly about and laid his arms out over the seat and dropped his head upon them, and his shoulders heaved and twisted with sobs.

"Oh, I say!" cried young Harrington, gently. He had almost never before seen a man weep, and it distressed him curiously, even though this same man had been quite ready, not long before, to kill him where he stood.

"Oh, I say!" he cried again, awkwardly. "Don't—don't do that, you know! I—well, it's hard luck and all, but—somebody's got to lose. Don't do—that! You—you see, you were on the wrong side. You *had* to lose. It wouldn't do for you to win. It would have meant," said he, with a diplomatic air, "the repainting of the map of Europe—I have it on excellent authority. Don't be—don't be cut up over it. Better luck next time! And—and a better cause, you know. Eh, what?"

But the spy turned, still kneeling upon the floor beside the red plush seat, and faced him. He seemed not at all ashamed of his tears nor of the marks of grief upon his face.

"You!" he said, in a low, choked voice. "You prate to me of causes and rights and wrongs! You who came into all this through a boy's silly vanity and love for excitement. You who were willing to be made a thief because a man told you a romantic fairy tale! How dare you talk of rights and wrongs? Better luck next time! I tell you there will be no next time! It was win or die for me, this time. I was to be shot against a wall, two weeks ago, but they gave me this chance to win back my life and gain independence for Bohemia. I tell you I should have been remembered for a century! They would have called me the savior of Bohemia. Now—better luck next time! Ah, go, go! Do not stand there gloating. Will you not go?" He turned about once more and dropped his face upon his outstretched arms. Young Harrington tiptoed softly from the room and closed the door behind him.

Once out in the passage, he paused a moment.

"Wonder if I'd best leave him there with that pistol?" he said to himself, and half turned to go back. But he could not bring himself again to enter the stateroom where that man knelt weeping.

A little way down the corridor he found the other three and nodded at them joyously.

"Where's the princess?" he demanded. "I want the princess. This



melodrama has got to have a star finish or the curtain doesn't go down at all."

They found the princess up above in the companionway. The elderly countess was with her. She started toward them with a little, anxious, beseeching cry which ended in a sob of relief at Colonel von Altdorf's nod.

Young Mr. Harrington drew the fastened and sealed bundle of papers from his pocket and held them out.

"Here is your property, madam," said he. "It appears to be of some value. I shouldn't leave it about, if I were you. It only tempts foolish young men to melodrama." He shook his head at her, humorously, and folded his arms behind him with a little sigh, as if he were glad to have his hands free once more.

"These affairs of state!" he complained. "They're too jolly serious for me. I was never cut out for them, I expect. I expect football is more in my line. Eh, what? Yes, I expect I'd best stick to football."

Then, just as he had finished speaking, and before the Princess Beatrice could reply, there came from below, muffled and deadened by distance, but quite distinct, the sound of a revolver shot.

"What was that?" asked the princess, quickly. "What was that? It sounded like a shot."

Young Harrington's eyes met those of Colonel von Altdorf and lingered.

"That?" said he, gently. "That was only the curtain signal, princess. It marks the end of the play."



## REMORSE

FIVE out for tickets; four for cab;  
And twelve for Glories of Dijon;  
The *petit souper* cost me six—  
That's twenty-seven—a mere song.

I do not grudge a sou of it—  
No; not at twenty times the cost;  
For, was not she the radiant guest,  
And I her happy, honored host?

And yet, this morningtide,—and yet  
I feel one pang my peace disrupt—  
I wish I had the coin I tipped  
That pampered waiter where we supped.

S. H. PETERS.

# OMNIPOTENCE

By Ella Wheeler Wilcox

MUSING at times on this vast Universe,  
My pigmy self, abashed and mortified,  
In patient silence, would henceforth abide,  
Nor strive with its poor protest, to disperse  
The seeming shadows from our one small world.  
That Power which fashioned mountains, shaped the sea,  
And into space a million planets hurled,  
Could have no need of any aid from me.

The tiniest seed, what mind can understand  
With all its hidden mysteries of bloom?  
The whole grand system, by a Master planned,  
For human interference leaves no room.  
All things move onward to their certain goal:  
What God conceived, God only can control.

Sudden the old cry breaks upon my ear,  
The protest and appeal of the oppressed!  
Something immortal awakens in my breast,  
And answers to that call, "I hear, I hear!"  
The burdens of the suffering world seem mine  
And mine progression's healthful discontent.  
My greater self proclaims itself divine—  
Knows whence it came, and wherefore it was sent.

When the first ray pierced through chaotic night  
My spirit was conceived by primal force,  
And started on its way to gather light  
And scatter it along earth's troubled course.  
Kin to the sun and sea and wind and sky,  
A part of the Omnipotence am I.

I am important to the perfect plan,  
And I assist the purpose. As the sun  
Completes the projects by the cause begun,  
So His intentions are worked out by man.

## THE DISENCHANTMENT

In the construction of a great machine  
The smallest parts are needed by the whole;  
The mighty wheel is held by bolts unseen.  
So in God's earth there is no useless soul.

We are the means to some majestic end,  
Through us must come the universal good,  
In us the forces of the Maker blend,  
On us depends the larger brotherhood;  
With us mankind must journey to the heights—  
Let us go forth, and set God's world to rights!



# THE DISENCHANTMENT

By Edward Steed

HAVEN OLIVER took the letter from his pocket as he stepped into the hansom and studied it slowly. His lips moved at the closing words:

"Come and see me, 717 Riverside Drive, the moment you land in New York—otherwise I may forget that rainy day at Como.

"Cordially, HOPE TAILER.

"Vevay, Switzerland, September 3d."

The cab jostled the waddling trucks of West Street and turned among the red bricks of Greenwich Village.

Oliver was landing from Europe, and it was the last day of September. He had met Hope Tailer at Biarritz in the summer just past, the first following his graduation from Harvard. She had been alone with an aunt, and the three had gone on to Switzerland by somewhat the same route; but with the aunt she had started for America before him in early September, and Oliver had received the letter in Berlin the week before he sailed.

As he flopped on through the misty mugginess of New York in early autumn, and the patriotic fervor of an American landing for the first time in

his native country waned in its haze and dust and bustle, his thoughts turned, as they did inevitably when he read the letter, from its writer to her family.

Oliver and Hope Tailer's brother, Jack, had been classmates in Cambridge, one obscure in the little college world, the other conspicuous. Oliver, a New Englander, schooled where the history textbooks referred to his ancestors, had led a friendless four years. Tailer, on the other hand, assumed leadership at Harvard as if by divine right. Clubs of all sorts elected him, Beacon Street flung wide its portals to him and hung on his words; and he was chosen to sit on the commencement dais with the faculty. From all this, to begin with, Haven drew certain distinct impressions concerning Tailer and his family.

The longer he studied the note the harder he felt it would be to call on the Tailers that afternoon. Why had Hope never spoken to him of her people, not even of Jack? Surely she knew that he was in Oliver's class, although Haven hardly knew Jack Tailer at college—the great Tailer, broad-shouldered, light-

haired, with deep-lined features, which Haven disliked—who spent money so freely, and surely belonged to one of those New York families of great wealth and prominence that have taken, as it were, the bit of social precedence from the teeth of older clans of the republic.

Oliver, like many a New Englander nowadays, with traditions and without money, felt that New Yorkers of the new social era would be inclined to patronize him; and he secretly looked up to and feared Jack Tailer and his people.

He felt more than ever this morning that this was not a worthy awe; he knew it was a sort of adulation which he condemned the more that he could single out no real ground for it. But feelings of servility he did have and he could not overcome them; it was no use any more trying to stir up his family pride for that.

After all, the small college world, whose judgments were never so very much amiss, had labeled him a non-entity, Tailer a personage; so might not the world as justly require the Oliver clan, which had not kept to the fore in the social or financial race for a hundred years, to recognize the Tailers, who seemed to be leading it, to be as superior to it as Jack was admittedly superior to him—Haven Oliver? Probably Hope knew of the failure of his college life, of Jack's eminence, and his obscurity, and so had charitably not mentioned Jack to him.

He folded the letter slowly and replaced it in his pocket as the hansom turned up Broadway.

This concern about the Tailers now annoyed him more than ever, for it not only disturbed his home-coming, but it distorted his anticipation of seeing Hope; vexed him especially, since Haven had the reputation for being rather a sophisticated youth, who affected to believe that social distinctions were foolish; and, moreover, being a frank young person, he wanted to be sincere with himself and so desirable a *répûte*—sincere especially in the presence of the girl he loved. One thing was certain; sincerity demanded that to-day he reveal to Hope his feelings of awe for her

family; make her confess that, conscious of her great wealth and position, she had not told him about her people while abroad in order not to embarrass him, having heard of his college obscurity from her brother; for the same reasons had not mentioned Jack.

Oliver sat at luncheon in the raw turmoil of the Astoria, the letter propped up before him. By the time he paid his check, he felt he had pretty well dissected the reasons for his shyness toward the Tailers, and mapped a plan of verbal campaign for any member of the family he first met in the Tailer drawing-room; and with the confidence born of youth and its pride in isolating and ticketing its own emotions, he went out into the humanly padded lobby to look up Riverside Drive in the directory. He had never heard of it before. What sort of a neighborhood was it? The few New Yorkers he knew lived within a few blocks of where he was, or much further downtown.

At four o'clock, walking in that New York greenery below which freight trains rumble and whence the spreading wash of tows on the Hudson is seen under the grim ramparts beginning the Palisades, Haven discerned house No. 717. He made particular note of it well—perhaps since he believed he intended to be an architect. It was an American basement, white sandstone affair, with bulging bays of curved glass surmounted with garlands of chiseled fruit and flowers. The front door stood down an alley of metal palings—the product of a wrought-iron art works—and seemed less possible than the low oblong of carved oak nearby, let into the solid stone for the benefit of grocers.

As he waited at the high portal of iron and glass backed with cherry-colored silk, he observed that all the other houses in the block were much like the Tailers—of white sandstone, with bays of various girths and styles of floral ornament—as if the one contractor who built all at once had done his level best to put variety of some sort into the job.

Two buff youths in waistcoats with brass buttons—the ladies being at

home—bowed Haven past a system of mirrors that revealed distressing repetitions of his small dark figure; past a huge hearthstone in the painted shade of two fibre-stemmed palms, then behind two monolithic pillars, one green, the other red, to the stairway, into whose scarlet covering his boot soles sank like strips of lead.

In the big room above he sat down on the periphery of a velvet sofa, red also, and Titanic. The emblem of the interior was a sanguinary shade. Red watered silk covered the walls, the ceiling was of red stamped leather with a big circular panel showing two angels in flowing crimson robes linked together as if about to waltz into a sunset cloud. Oil paintings, shoulder to shoulder, crowded the walls, the largest showing a number of European soldiers in the aching vermilion coats of early last century, driving a band of ragged peasants, all hands with their backs turned, down a dark brown road of mud into a dazzling twilight. Haven thought he had seen this masterpiece before, though on the gold lozenge under it the artist's name—French with a Polish surname—he had never heard of. Ah! he remembered—some such red soldiers had glared at him from the window of a Fifth Avenue print store while his hansom was blocked that morning. So he waited the pot luck—the ladies being at home—of greeting mother, daughter, governess, manicure, or confidential friend.

In a moment silks rustled somewhere overhead, and a robust elderly lady, dressed in lilac, with heavy masses of gray hair bulging out over her temples, glided into the room. Before showing she was aware of Haven's presence, she clicked an electric button by the soldier painting, which lit a lamp in a stamped tin hood over the frame.

"So you are the Mr. Oliver," she said, suddenly, turning and extending her hand, "that struck up a chance acquaintance with my daughter in Europe, I believe? She has alluded to you," and Mrs. Tailer sank into a *tête-à-tête* chair, leaning her elbow on the arm, and her head on her hand.

Haven explained how Miss Tailer had asked him to call as soon as he landed.

"I was going straight home," he blundered on, "because I never dreamed you'd be back from the country so soon. Why, I almost bought a ticket for the one o'clock flyer to Boston this afternoon."

"We always come to town early," said Mrs. Tailer, opening her eyes wide and fixing them on Haven. "I know it's not the smart thing to be back so soon, but oh! it's so futile," she sighed, "to keep up with the requirements of society in every respect. I've got so now I don't care," and she raised her shoulders, allowing them to fall slowly into position again. "I just let things go. But had you gone to Boston at one (she pronounced it Boss-tun) you might have met the Cassoways."

She emphasized the name as if they were persons of particular importance, and seemed to wait for Haven to express the impression which mention of them should make on him. But Haven, embarrassed further by the introduction of seeming strangers into the conversation, remained silent.

"They were to be on that train," Mrs. Tailer therefore went on; "the Cassoways of West End Avenue, you know, the great rubber people. At least you have heard of them in Boston. They have an elegant estate near there."

"Cassoways?" queried Haven, as the name stirred his memory. "You don't mean those new people that have just built that feudal castle on the Beverly main street—oh—and are impossibly rich? I know I haven't seen them; but I don't think any one there knows them yet."

"I don't understand you," said Mrs. Tailer. "No one knows the Cassoways? We should not call them new people. Every one knows them here. They are the very best people."

"Pardon me," said Haven, "I'm very sorry—I've made a mistake," and there was a pause. Mrs. Tailer took out her carved gold lorgnette and fixed her gaze on him. "Only—you see—I'm often in Beverly in the summer," he

added helplessly. "And I hear a lot of talk. I can't help it."

"Oh, are you often in Beverly?" she said, still glaring at him. "But I suppose it is a large resort now and every one doesn't get the opportunity of knowing every one else—especially the nice people."

"Or one doesn't always want to know," laughed Oliver, "every one who calls himself 'nice.'"

Mrs. Tailer opened her mouth as if to make an exclamation, and her lorgnette clicked on the jet facing of her dress as she dropped her hands, with a *Delsarte* motion, into her lap. Haven saw the double meaning of his last words, by which he had meant flippantly to relieve the tension of the conversation, and he flushed to the ears.

"The Cassoways are my friends," said Mrs. Tailer coldly, controlling herself. "I trust they are *not* acquainted at Beverly with persons who would speak slightly of them."

Haven was quite overcome. He started an apology humble enough to have moved a sphinx.

"Ah, but it's a lesson to me never to repeat gossip," he pleaded, "never to repeat, especially what those Porters down at Beverly say. Mrs. Tailer," he ended feelingly, "the Porters, who told me all that about your friends, are fearful snobs, even if they are my own cousins."

Mrs. Tailer did not seem mollified until the very end of Haven's speech. Then quickly her features melted, and her lips drew apart. She glanced swiftly at Haven, rose, hesitated, and walking determinedly to the wall, pressed an electric button.

"Good-afternoon," he said, rising, and waited a full moment for some sign that she had heard. "Good-afternoon."

"Oh—Mr. Oliver, pray be seated," she said, smiling. "I was hasty."

Haven sat down again awkwardly on the red sofa.

At the same minute the butler appeared at the door.

"Bring in the tea, Luddington," said Mrs. Tailer to him gently.

There was another long pause. At

last Mrs. Tailer turned around in the chair, leaning her head on her hand exactly as she had done before, and readjusting the lorgnette, began:

"The Porters are your cousins? Such charming people! I know them. We sat at the same table with them for a week at a hotel in the White Mountains once. You know, they belong to one of the oldest and smartest Boston families. My son Jack knows them very intimately. It's strange he never mentioned to me that you were their cousin. But then, Jack knows so many people in Boston, and goes out so much. He had such a brilliant career at college, didn't he?"

Haven tried to assent to all this in some way, but he could not get a word in edgewise before she went on:

"How small the world is, isn't it? To think that you should be a cousin of the Porters, Jack's friends, the Porters! You go out in Boston a good deal, I suppose, being so well connected there?"

She arose, beaming, as Haven attempted a reply.

"Now can't you stay to dinner? Jack will lend you an extra dress suit he has. We always dress in the city. I think it's so much nicer," and with that she arose and walked to the door, lingering on the threshold long enough to say over her shoulder, "Hope will be so delighted to see you. It will be such a pleasant surprise. She has spoken to us about you so much. I wonder where she can be?" and without further ceremony Mrs. Tailer swept out of the room and up the padded stairway.

It seemed to Haven he sat stone-still very long, watching the buff butler fiddle with the cumbrous silver tea things, and then turn on the fire.

A favorite phrase of his to express disillusionment referred to golden idols and clay feet. Hereafter, he felt, he would make no slipshod use of the metaphor. So, who were the Tailers, after all? They were wealthy, at any rate, and lived in, well—splendor. Thus, as he was studying the room again he suddenly saw gazing down on him the features of a tall, dark girl with high cheek



bones and full cheeks that slanted in quickly to a small, firm chin—a portrait of Hope herself. He had been about to smile, but now, shocked at his irreverence, checked himself; and at the same moment his heart tightened, and he saw the painting's original standing silently at his side.

"Hope," he said, impetuously, "Hope! I've fearfully offended your mother."

She dropped her eyes and turned away her head.

"No," she said, "you've not offended her. That's the hopeless part of it. She's—delighted. I've seen her. She's told me—everything."

Haven took a quick breath.

"But I did speak lightly of her friends. I was hasty. Oh, I only—"

"Haven, it is not you that owe an apology to her," she said, raising her hand with a calm smile, suggesting at once tears and laughter. "It is we who owe it to you. We've deceived you so long. Oh, oh, don't you understand," and she sank upon the sofa at his side. "You mustn't mind what dear mamma says. She's impossible. There," she gasped, "and now you'll despise me for apologizing for my own mother. But—don't you see, don't you see what we all are?"

"Hope," said Haven, tensely, "you shan't talk like that. It isn't fair to yourself. It isn't fair to me, Hope, who—who—love you."

"All along I deceived you," she went on, only more excitedly. "I deceived you into thinking we were the sort of people that we aren't. I made you think we were sort of on top of the social ladder here in New York. Not that I said so directly, but I saw you had the impression, I saw you believed it. I knew you got the idea first from Jack at college, and the way every one took him up, up there. And seeing us abroad, spending so much, traveling so splendidly, only strengthened it. And I never made any attempt to correct the idea," she pleaded. "I couldn't. I kept putting it off and off. That's why I never said anything about my family or Jack to you. It took a fearful effort to write that note. I knew it would all

have to come out then—as soon as you saw this house—and mother—and everything. And now mother's gone and made it all the worse, even if she has saved me the humiliation."

She buried her face in a cushion. Haven sat down beside her, seizing her hand.

"What have we to do," he said, "what has any one with real feelings to do—who cares—with all these mock distinctions of what a few fools call society? And after that day on the lake, Hope! I can't have you humble yourself so. You're making mountains out of mole-hills, out of nothing." He paused; then continued firmly: "Come, Hope, we must drop all this. Let me pour you some tea."

But she remained motionless, her head buried. He marveled a moment at the causes for which womankind, whose passion is pity, will, when pride might dignify and repress, strangle it, for the extreme of humiliation; but when he had filled the second cup he put down the sugar-bowl firmly, like a man making a hard resolution.

"I am the one to be ashamed of myself, Hope, not you," he declared. "I am the one who has the confession to make, the most foolish, snobby confession of all. I did believe as you thought about your wealth and position. But it wasn't your fault, Hope."

"Haven, Haven," she interrupted, "don't you see you are making it worse and worse for me? Don't apologize for me!"

"I must be honest and frank, too," he said. "If you confess your illusions, Hope, it is three times as imperative for me to confess mine. Nothing which we have felt can be left unsaid between us." He drew closer to her. "Hope," he said, "it was true that I was coming here to-night to tell you that as the last heir of a dead and decayed old family, I wasn't worthy of what I thought you were. But unless you had spoken first of these nameless impressions that have separated us, I should not have dared. You are the strong one, Hope, I am the weak."

"Don't, don't, Haven," she cried.

"But nothing that you said or did, or your mother or your family said or left unsaid, had the least to do with deceiving me. It was all due to my own weakness, and to the foolish artificial standards of this world—this hypocritical world, which had rather deceive itself and every one than not. It deceived itself about you, because its mind is evil; it mistook your straightforwardness and simplicity for false pride, it called your wealth proudness of purse and it imposed its deceptions on me, the born snob, and even on you, the sensitive woman. Ah, Hope, don't you see, because I love you, I love you."

His arm slipped about her, and she did not move.

"Cheer up, dear, and let's forget this. We've both put our foot into it a bit, both showed that what the world thinks counts too much with both of us. . . . Hope, do you know, dear, this feeling of class, this awe of social distinctions, is fearful? It's part of our civilization, we breathe it in the very air, we can't escape it. I don't know where people are drifting. Money it's easy enough to get, birth and tradition it's easy enough to be born with, but this mysterious something, this recognition and reputation in the eyes of the world, which may be due to neither one nor to all—men who have done big things in the world seem willing to barter everything for. The taint of that silly adulation has touched us, Hope, each in a different spot. But, thank Heaven, we've found it out in time. It can't separate us now. We don't care now, do we? Ah, Hope, how I love you, how I love you!"

When the buff butler knocked stealthily, wanting to light the poppy-red electric wall brackets, Hope and Haven were still seated on the vermilion divan. The tea which Haven had poured was cold and untasted in the cups. As the man left the room, Hope began again:

"And this queer way of spelling our name—that was dear mamma's idea, too. I didn't say anything, any more

than when she let those decorators do this kind of a house. But I've often wondered what poor father would have said if he'd been alive, and come to open the family mail. I remember the way he used to talk, the things he used to say about the chilly faces of those rich Chicago people, when they drove out around the lake past his blacksmith shop—there before he got the receipt for the bitters from that peddler and put every cent he had saved into advertising. Dear mamma is so funny and exasperating sometimes, and when she gets hold of some one she thinks reflects the real social glow, like you, she slops right over as she did to-day. She takes all the conventions of calling and dining so strictly and so seriously, and talks right out about whom she knows and whom she'd like to know, and whom it would be right to cultivate, and whom to drop. I often tremble to think of the scene she'll make if she ever gets an invitation to a real ball."

"You hear just the same sort of talk, Hope, in a household with ten colonial governors for forbears," said Haven. "Only then, somehow, it is more pitiful."

"Well, in all this, the only one I pity, who has really suffered from papa's patent medicine strike," went on Hope, "is Jack. He never sees anything down here of the very men who took him up at Harvard. That I don't understand. Jack hasn't changed a bit. Don't you think their Cambridge standards must be fearfully shallow?"

"Oh, all the world is wrong, Hope," he said, "all but you and I."

"As for the Cassoways," she ended. "Mrs. C. is just the sort who would go to a seashore watering place and build a feudal castle on the main street right next to the post office. So might mamma. But they are the best-hearted, nicest-people-at-bottom kind I know. And just you wait—in a hundred years when this country's an empire, as all the agitators say it's going to be, the Cassoways will be wearing the coronets—even if their suspender works out in Duluth do smell fearfully now—and, and—not you and I."

# A LEAF FROM HIS SALAD DAYS

By Baroness Von Hutten

JUDGE WYNDHAM stood in the window looking out into a world of whirling whiteness. The snow lent a new aspect to the familiar view, and the sunlight edged the black trees with glowing gold.

Presently the man turned, his mouth firm under the thick, gray mustache.

"I've said all I have to say, Mary. You might as well go."

Molly Wyndham frowned openly at him.

"So have I, papa—said all that I have to say. As to going—well, if I go, I stay."

"I meant, go to your room."

"And I meant, go to granny's."

"I see. Your grandmother is a very silly woman, who has always spoiled you outrageously, but I doubt whether even she, in this case—"

Molly arose impatiently.

"Granny always does exactly what I—advise her, papa, and you know it as well as I do. Good-by."

He looked at her reflectively, mildly, half admiringly, and the look meant, she knew, the most unswerving obstinacy.

"Good-by," he said, gently, and she left the room, closing the door with care.

Wyndham sat down and put a log on the dying fire. It was done, then. The big split he had always more or less expected between his daughter and himself, had come. He would not consent to Molly's marrying Ambrose Stanham, and Molly would marry the man without consent.

Wyndham stared at the fire, but his face did not soften, and no sigh disturbed the fixed lines of his mouth.

The Wyndham obstinacy stood him

in good stead. It was as much a feature in the family as the remarkably clean-cut chin that they were all so proud of and had always been much more considered by its possessors. A Wyndham who had not the obstinacy would have been as great an anomaly as a trunkless elephant, and he, Frederic, son of Frederic Lewis, had been brought up in this belief.

Stanham was not the man for Molly, and, if Molly insisted on having him, she was to be cut off from the several advantages, material and otherwise, that accrued to her position of the youngest female Wyndham. The log blazed and the man who watched it did not move.

Then suddenly the door opened and Molly came in, wincing a trifle in a way she had in the presence of those on whom she wished to make an impression.

"Papa, here is Mrs. Catherwood."

Wyndham arose.

"Mrs. Catherwood—?"

The tall, rather broad woman, broader than necessary in a gorgeous fur coat, laughed and held out her hand.

"Mrs. Catherwood since '75. Before that date of dates, Isabel Gaines."

Molly watched her father with the un-Wyndhamlike forgetfulness of recent wrath that she had from her dead mother.

"Isabel Gaines!" He held out his hands in evident embarrassment, and his daughter fancied that he flushed, but it might have been the fire which just then leaped up and danced merrily over the man and the woman whose greeting was so conventional, whose faces so full of interest in each other.

"I knew your father years ago, my

dear," Mrs. Catherwood began, sitting down and throwing back her veil. "We were engaged once—weren't we?" There was an amusing note of doubt in her voice.

"We were, indeed," Wyndham answered. "I—was very much in love with you, Isabel."

Molly, utterly forgetful of the expectant Mr. Stanham, who was supposedly passing the afternoon at his telephone waiting for her to call him up, sank suddenly into a low chair in the shadow. While her father and his guest asked and answered the questions usual to such a situation the girl studied their two faces. Mrs. Catherwood's was a rather fine one, though its lines were somewhat blurred with the encroaching of fat, the predominating look in it was one of quiet, humorous strength.

Her eyes were strange—they looked like eyes once fierce, grown gentle through a never ending, not unamiable amusement in human follies. Molly liked her.

"The judge," as the girl called her father, as she turned to him, smiled at his guest with his usual urbane courtesy, but he looked less judgeline than usual.

"California!" he was saying. "How very charming!"

"Oh, yes, very good as to climate—you may know the saying that while heaven presumably rejoices in a fine, mild climate, socially the other place may be preferable. There have been times when climate was not all-suffering—"

She laughed, and Molly chuckled softly.

"Is this big girl your only child?"

Wyndham started.

"Yes. I lost a boy years ago."

"Ah! And your wife—"

"Died when Molly was four."

Mrs. Catherwood turned and looked at the girl in her corner.

"Ah, then, you two must be—much to each other."

Neither of the others spoke, and the Wyndham obstinacy suddenly rushed to his eyes and to his mouth, as they stared

half in embarrassment, half in defiance at each other.

"I never had a girl," Mrs. Catherwood went on. "I have one boy. How old are you—Molly?"

"Twenty-one. I—am going to be married next week." It was a sudden resolution, and the girl shivered with pleasure in the daring of its conception.

"Married! How delightful! To whom? Think of you with a daughter to be married next week, Fred!" Wyndham did not answer, and Molly went on, demurely enough, but with a delicious sensation of being understood.

"Father refuses his consent. He has cast me off, and I am going—when you have left."

"Mary!"

"I know, papa, but you can't put me out of the door by force, before Mrs. Catherwood, and I like her and I'm going to stay a few minutes longer."

Isabel Catherwood leaned over and caught the girl's hand in hers.

"Why do you object, Fred? Who's the man?"

"His name is Stanham, and he's—he's a dear. Father objects to him because he wears a buttonhole, and has a manservant. He objects to father because—well, it's easy to all why he should and does object to father."

She pointed a small rosy finger at her astonished father, and Mrs. Catherwood nodded.

"Yes. I should object to you most awfully as a father-in-law." Then she laughed, delightfully.

"It is kind of you, Isabel, to take this interest in my affairs, but—"

Then dropping Molly's enthusiastic hand Mrs. Catherwood wheeled about, facing him and asked him point-blank to specify his objections to the young man in question, and to his own amazement, Frederic Wyndham found himself obeying her.

"My chief reason is that the man is a fool, in love one minute with one woman, the next with another. As he's been engaged twice since he came to town—"

"Three times, papa."

"That is rather serious, Molly."

Mrs. Catherwood's eyes changed.

"I fear I must admit that that quality is a bad one."

"Pooh! He didn't care a penny for either of—of the others. Mrs. Brancepeth is years older than he, and—and the other girl——" she broke down. "But he *does* love me."

"Of course you think so, my dear."

Wyndham smiled as he spoke. A new ally seemed to have sprung out of the forgottenness of twenty-five years, and an able one.

"I know it, papa."

"I offered to give my consent in a year, if——"

The girl arose.

"If he didn't look at another girl all the year, and that's perfectly *impossible*. That's why I must marry him now!"

"Why is it impossible if, as you say, the fellow loves you?"

Wyndham spoke wearily; they had discussed the point so often.

"Because—because he *is* that kind of a man. He can't help liking girls—pretty ones. He's an artist. But it's me he loves. Oh, it *is*, Mrs. Catherwood!"

Then Isabel Catherwood took from her pocket a bottle of smelling salts and after a thoughtful sniff, spoke:

"Fred, do you remember Ella Banks?"

"Certainly I do."

"And Sue Wright?"

"Yes."

"And the little French girl, what did they call her, Alonette something——?"

"Alonette? Oh, yes. I think so. Curly hair and tapering fingers. Yes."

"And—me?"

"*You?* I don't understand what you mean."

"You were nineteen when you were in love with Ella, weren't you?"

"Oh, in love! That's saying a good deal. I—liked her."

"You loved her. At least, you thought you did. You were engaged to Sue Wright when you were twenty-one."

"Yes. She threw me over and married—whom did she marry?"

"And Alonette. Alonette didn't throw you over."

Wyndham flushed, then he frowned.

"This is only ancient history, however. Tell me more about your own life. You said California, I believe?"

"Once at a dance at the Hubbards you asked me to marry you. I was in love with you, Fred. We were engaged for a year, and then—it didn't break. It dissolved. Then you went away. Whom did you marry?"

"Mother was a Miss Carson, of Kentucky," Molly spoke, softly. "There's her picture."

The picture hung in the shadow.

Reaching out his hand Wyndham turned on a glow of shaded light that fell on the beautiful young face painted by a master of his art, and for a minute no one spoke.

Then Mrs. Catherwood said:

"It was she you loved."

Wyndham bowed his white head.

"And the—the rest of us? The rest of us were merely episodic!"

He turned, something in his eyes that smote his daughter, who arose, and, slipping her hand through his arm, stood facing the stranger who was hurting him.

"Yes," he said, shortly, "the rest of you were merely episodic."

"And—afterward," she persisted, with an unexpected tactlessness. "Afterward?"

"Oh, *do* be still!" cried the girl. "How can you? There *were* no episodes afterward."

Then Isabel Catherwood's face changed again—stooping she kissed Molly's cheek.

"Oh, you *dear*," she said, gently.

Then, turning to Wyndham:

"Are you not convinced, Fred? Can't Molly's sweetheart have episodes—beforehand?"

"Oh!"

Wyndham dropped Molly's arm, but his eyes held hers and his heart and hers were in close sympathy that moment.

"Oh, father!"

"We—will try, Molly."

Then he turned to Mrs. Catherwood.  
"How long are you to be in town?"  
he asked, formally.

"I shall be here for a week, Fred.  
And—do you forgive me?"

"Forgive you?"

The obstinacy stood out like a scar on  
his face, but his smile was fearless.

"Yes, for reminding you of those

days—your salad days? Molly—speak  
for me."

And Molly spoke by kissing her  
father. He held out his hand.

"I—shall hope to see you again——"

"Yes. Come, Molly, kiss me, too,  
for—Ambrose Stanham is my stepson.  
Thanks to him if he ever felt the  
'step!'"



## THE IDEAL MAN

By Kate Masterson

OF course there is none.  
While the girl in love, and  
sometimes the married one, in-  
vests her choice with an aureole invis-  
ible to other eyes, it is in her fancy that  
his unparalleled excellencies exist rather  
than in reality.

In spite of the varying tastes of fem-  
inity as to what is requisite for the  
making of the nearly-perfect man—or  
perhaps it may be because of these  
tastes—no man can ever hope satisfac-  
torily to fill out the invisible question  
blank which women carry mentally en-  
throned until they are past thirty, when  
their fancies cease to soar, and perch  
nearer the earth.

Girls seek so many combinations in  
their Ideal Man that he ever recedes  
from their vision like a vanishing pic-  
ture in a magician's cabinet.

They begin by admiring good looks,  
but when they find a beauty man they  
are not content unless he can show a  
list of other endowments, courtesy, ear-  
nestness and some intelligence.

The girl who adores intellectuality  
and depth is not content when she finds  
the faults of a bookworm in conjunction  
with the brain of a Demosthenes, or the  
irritability of genius with the soul of the  
dreamer.

The young woman who raves over

college athletes is bound to mourn when  
she finds her Apollo of the football field  
lacking in imagination, with a dreadful  
dinner appetite and bad manners.

The coquette, who will only listen to  
men who make themselves slaves to her  
caprice, smiles when she wins her vic-  
tory, but she begins to pout when she  
finds she has acquired only a tame cat  
to sit at her feet and purr compliments  
in her ear.

The serious girl, who rejoices when  
she comes upon a man of high moral  
character and integrity above reproach,  
sighs when she realizes that she has  
chained to the mutual fireside a some-  
what narrow-minded individual dis-  
posed to preach and exalt himself above  
his neighbors. You will find her in  
orchestra seats at matinées and the  
opera, her eyes glowing over the ro-  
mantic vagabonds of romance and dra-  
matic literature.

And the romantic maiden, who weds  
the soldier of fortune, the dashing,  
handsome, impulsive winner of all wom-  
en's hearts, weeps alone when she dis-  
covers his keen appetite for very  
earthly delights, and his careless and  
debonair manner of leaving bills un-  
paid and rent day to take care of  
itself.

The Ideal Man as women would make



him out to be if their several tastes were consulted as a *recipe* would be indeed an Impossible He! He would be a creature never seen on land or sea—a monster that only a feminine Frankenstein could create.

He would be part Sunday-school teacher and part Don Cesar—beautiful of face and manly of form—yet without vanity, quick with his sword, yet a paragon of mercy to the afflicted; deeply intelligent, yet never preoccupied; with the soul of a poet, and the pocketbook of a broker; a good judge of a bonnet, and not too particular as to cooking; charming of temper, quick to forgive feminine faults; grand of character, yet an adept in drawing-room persiflage.

Such a man if he existed would have to live in a cage to be looked at and photographed, for he would not be companionable to women or to men. He would be a freak, to be seen at a distance and never to be loved, for when we look deep we find that we like people more for their faults than their virtues.

We learn in life's school that actual nobility of character, if we can use so pretentious a term in connection with mere masculine human nature, is apt to lurk under the least impressive outside. Real saints never look in the least like the statues that artists make of them, and the soul of a Damien can live in the body of a leper, just as genius often chooses to hide in an unkempt shell.

The psalm-singing, scripture-quoting masculine type has been ridiculous ever since Dickens tagged his Pecksniff hypocrite, and we have learned to know the breed on sight.

Woman, despite the classification that man has accorded her as a conundrum, is easier to understand than man. She is an aspiration and an inspiration at the same time. She fails to find her Ideal Man, but she never gives up her Ideal, and when she fails to realize it in her husband she hopefully sets about to create it in her son.

The women Idealists who keep on seeking the Impossible He are unconscious missionaries in their way, and all the time there are men following in their

footsteps beating drums and invisible tambourines. Brought in contact with the Ideals of womenkind and instructed that he is supposed to adhere to a certain standard, man begins to grope like Ibsen's blind men in the forest, and while he can never emerge from his maculinity, the effort he makes toward Ideality under the inspiration of the woman he loves, is far more magnificent than the ready-made angel that woman's fancy builds.

It has been written that the Ideal Man is a bachelor, and, realizing his faults and his imperfections, he never dares to marry. His orbit is outside the golden circle of the family; he is a shooting star in velvet coat and Turkish slippers. But the Bachelor has never given any proof of his claim to the title.

As we have grown to know him, he is a trifle hennish in his tastes, given to cooking in a chafing dish and pitying women's husbands.

Woman to man represents a palpable Ideal, although he fails to compensate her freakish desire for a stained-glass human in trousers and English waistcoats. Her imagination has to suffice, and she keeps it fed with fancies as to what he is and what he may become.

Love is the saving grace that keeps this condition from chaos. Perfect realization or disillusion would result in a sex war. The field would be strewn with dead ideals, collar buttons and hairpins.

But at every dive that man takes from his pedestal, and a dive from a pedestal always results in a crash, Love steps in with healing balm in the way of memories, forgiveness and hope. Man resumes his slightly-battered halo, and if it is a little to one side woman never pretends to notice. She has learned to be above trifles, and can patch up a wreck while it will hold together.

Searching the field of history for Ideals in the way of men we find a weary task. Among all the great ones in the ruling of nations and the winning of them, who can bear the palm which would make him a woman's hero—a fireside angel, content to hang his laurel wreath on the hall hatstand and for-

sake the plaudits of the multitude for the coo of his babe?

Almost instinctively we recall the humorous father of the comic weeklies struggling through a midnight cake-walk with a belligerent baby—sometimes twins—it is always more comic when they are twins—while the crown of his wife's head shows from the top of the counterpane.

This picture has been considered uproariously funny for ages, but in reality it is beautifully symbolic of Ideality, and that is why it has lived so long, while magazine poets have starved try-

ing to voice their yearnings toward the infinite, while ignoring the infant.

But the humorous father represents a trinity—Romance rewarded by achievement and crowned with sacrifice!

Surely when we look within our heart of hearts and drive from there the Impossible He—half dare-devil, half saint; part scholar and part beau—writing poems and checks with equal facility, we can turn with a certain feeling of compensation to this other picture and admit, even though it be with a half sigh, that this, after all, comes nearest to the Ideal Man!



## ABSOLVED

By Frank R. Robinson

THE familiar pictures retained their place on the walls of the consulate parlor. But the minor ornaments, however, draperies and bric-a-brac, those mute witnesses of woman's reign and realm, had been removed, and Trevanion noted their absence with a pang at heart, for they shared association with her—features of the past—and accordingly precious.

There were moments of quite recent experience when it was his volition to term himself a dupe and a fool, and even to curse the fate that had laid him blindly tribute to the magic of her presence. There were other, happier moments, when he thanked that mystic divinity at whose shrine universal man is votary, that the purity of her influence had been permitted to touch his profligate and discolored life.

There is an element of idealism in loving hopelessly as Trevanion had loved, until Floyd entered the lists—Floyd, with his handsome face, buoyant carriage and grace of manner. Gifted with the hundred attributes of fascina-

tion which win the feminine heart, his conquest, steadily progressing, had been of assured success from the beginning, and Trevanion learned in the bitterness of resignation that it is one thing to love without hope of requital and quite another to watch the fruition of a rival's essay.

Philosophy and reason impart but slight consolation to a mind harboring jealous instincts, so, envying Floyd's ready assumption of the prize his own aspiration had not even vaguely hoped to attain, Trevanion was conscious of a growing resentment toward Floyd, usurping the amicable sentiment that had characterized their almost intimate relation and approaching animosity.

The jingle of Spanish spurs, the champ of bits beneath the open window, a laughing colloquy and then the rustle of her skirt along the narrow path.

With heightened color Trevanion arose to meet her.

Tossing whip and gloves on the low hall seat, she entered with extended hand. "This is combined pleasure and

regret, Mr. Trevanion; I have just bidden Don farewell and now it is his master."

"I called to say good-by, Miss Sterling," he said, quietly, "but Don's arrangements are more fortunate. He has transportation on the *Orinoco* and through to Arion, so he will accompany you, if you will accept him. He has become so attached to you that I feel certain he would pine if you left him here."

"I am most grateful, but, really, I could not think of accepting such a gift from you."

"But, Miss Sterling," protested Trevanion, "Don is yours. He has virtually belonged to you since he came into my possession. I've considered him in that light, and myself in the capacity of your steward, and now I render you the talent, Don. He shows improvement under our care, but is valueless to me, so you need have no hesitation in taking your own."

"I am very sorry, but I can't accept him. This is decided and final, Mr. Trevanion, although I trust you will not consider me ungrateful. Believe me, I fully appreciate your kindness, and your effort to make my stay here pleasant. I am indebted to you for so much! Quite beyond my power ever to repay. I assure you, I am not unmindful of it."

"You could never be that," he said, smiling. "Of course, if you positively won't have Don, he will have to remain with me, and I promise he shall have good care. I suppose I shall see your father at the palace, as I go there directly. He will doubtless call on the President before departing."

"I haven't seen papa since breakfast," was her reply, "but I believe his official preparation was completed yesterday. He may call informally, this morning."

"In that case, I might miss seeing him. Should I be so unfortunate, will you please convey my respects? If I can possibly arrange to do so, I will be at the dock, but you know the disposal of my time is not always subject to my wish, and to be certain of good-by, I'll take first leave now." He held her hand. "I trust I may hear from you."

"I can't promise."

"And why not?" he asked, simply.

"There are reasons, but I prefer not to give them. I regret that our interest must end with the present. Let this suffice."

The flood of restrained jealousy rushed to his heart in an intense throb, and under the pressure of its potent influence his words evinced the strong emotion to which they gave vent.

"Must end! Because of Floyd, I suppose! You love him, and I am to be forced out of your life. Am I to assume that this treatment of me is a concession to his demand?"

"Assume what you choose, Mr. Trevanion," was her cold reply. "You forget yourself! When, pray, did you enter my life, and why do you question my course in closing what might have been a friendship of pleasing memory? Mr. Floyd has imposed no limits. He would not presume to dictate. He is a thorough gentleman."

He spoke more calmly.

"I am in the wrong. I ask your pardon. I spoke hastily and under strong feeling. Miss Sterling, my regard for you has not entertained the faintest hope further than the kindly consideration you have accorded me. Not one single ray of hope! Pray, do not charge me with fostering an optimism so fallacious. I have aspired to no higher honor than your friendship, and you will never know what that has been to me." His voice faltered. "The one bright gleam—the best, noblest impulse my worthless life has known. You do not realize. You cannot. I— And you cast me so utterly adrift."

She had listened with downcast eyes.

"Believe me, Mr. Trevanion, I am not unfeeling. I am sorry, truly sorry, but really I have no choice. In view of what you have just said, I feel that I owe you an explanation. Yes—and myself, also, but it is a painful subject and I would have preferred to spare us both, Mr. Trevanion, it has come to us, papa and me, that you are not a fit associate for a woman—for people of principle and honor. Your reputation is an unenviable one. We have learned that you are a fugitive from justice, an outlaw in

your country, which is our own, and are harbored here, secure from extradition, the servant and tool of General Juraz. To be crime-branded and ostracized from home and country might well seem sufficient, but you must needs add to your degradation by condoning cruel practices which mark his *régime*. You, an American, owing allegiance to an absolute dictatorship! Mr. Trevanion, you have forfeited the consideration of all self-respecting people. You chose to enter our circle with this stain upon you and you are now suffering the consequences. Permit me to bid you good-morning and good-by."

He was standing proudly erect, hauteur and humiliation manifest in his fixed gaze and curling lip.

"One moment, Miss Sterling! The last clause of your impeachment I pass with this comment: You have known, from the very first, that I am an *attaché* of President Juraz's cabinet. As acting secretary to his excellency, in how many instances, think you, has my influence tended to divert from execution harsh measures which otherwise would have been inflicted? I will own I am not here through philanthropic motives, but my conscience does not place me on trial because of the rigorous decrees of General Juraz's administration. God knows I've softened and restrained many of them. For the other, where, may I ask, did you derive this positive information as to my reputation? Who honored me with those titles?—Criminal! Outlaw!"

"That does not concern you, Mr. Trevanion. The source is a perfectly reliable one."

"I think it does deeply concern me," he retorted, hotly. "A criminal has the right to know his accuser."

"I have no more to say," she said, turning from him.

"But I have! Since you refuse to name him, I will. Floyd! Floyd, the cowardly slanderer! Floyd, who might never have met you, save through my friendly offices. Indebted to me for a hundred favors. I might have expected better return from him." He folded his arms, and spoke deliberately:

"Miss Sterling, Floyd has broken all

ties of good fellowship and faith. He is an ingrate and unworthy of you, but you may have him, when I am through with him, if you want him then. I shall deal with him according to his deserts. He shall answer to me for this, fully, completely. Do you understand?"

She replied from the door:

"Mr. Floyd is competent to care for himself. Mr. Trevanion, the servant——"

"Pray, don't take the trouble," he interrupted, "I can find my way out."

He stood for a moment irresolute, then passed into the hall. The jeweled whip, his gift to her a month before, lay on the cushion where she had carelessly flung it. He raised one of the slim, white gauntlets. "I may as well have this," he said to himself; "at the worst it only adds 'thief' to my numerous appellations." Thrusting it within his bosom he strode down the graveled walk. Somewhere back in past ages, the kaleidoscope in his brain held a picture which compared with the present in color of shame and contumely. When was it? Yes, memory at length caught the focus.

Rough in play with his mate, a pampered, delicately fashioned boy, the latter's mother, watching every movement of the exercise and deeming one throw especially reprehensible, promptly ordered him to go home. She was a person of lace and silk and of dignity and he obeyed her behest to the letter, his sensitive nature groveling in the disgrace of the situation.

"History repeats itself," he muttered. "Wouldn't Mrs. Elmore glory in the fulfillment of her oft-expressed prophecy of my career, had she heard my arraignment this morning?"

Entering the Presidio Club he ordered some light refreshment, and while this was being served he inquired of the waiter whether Mr. Floyd had visited the resort during the morning.

"He was here to late breakfast, about ten, I think," the man replied.

Trevanion looked at his watch. "Nearly one o'clock. They couldn't have taken a very long ride. Shall I wait for him here? No, I'll think it

over and get my nerves down to normal luncheon."

Luncheon over he sauntered across the plaza and entered the low stone edifice from which issued the mandates of General Juraz's government. That great man sat facing his writing table, pulling industriously on a long, black cigar. He turned his head and greeted Trevanion casually.

The President of Quisadio Republic was of prepossessing, even striking, appearance. Of medium height, broad-shouldered, with large, well-formed head, black eyes, black hair and beard, the latter closely trimmed and harmonizing with the firm mouth, straight nose and high forehead. An adept sophist, a cosmopolite and adventurer, a diplomat in the specious sense of the word, he represented the highest type of Spanish-American intelligence, aggressiveness and intrigue.

"I wish to talk with you, Trevanion."

"Very well," replied the latter, from his desk where he was arranging papers.

"News of the *Vista*. She made a night landing, quite a distance below here. Cargo ashore and safely buried. Here is a chart showing location of cache, compass points and direction from which it can be most readily approached. I place it about a four hours' trip, as the guacho jogs. The steamer is now in port, prepared to clear at our notice."

"Good," commented Trevanion.

"Manuel reported last evening and furnished the chart and information. He is anxious to be given another commission. Zealous man, Manuel."

"He seems very competent," remarked Trevanion.

"Ah, yes," responded the President. "Conspicuously efficient. That's what I wish to discuss with you. Perhaps one of less versatile attainments would better suit our purpose. Trevanion, we have made use of Manuel twice, thrice, with safe results, but at another venture the pitcher might break. The affair is of such rare promise, and you see, a breath, a mere breath, Trevanion—Manuel's mission is accomplished.

The exercise of a little tact will place him forever silent. Ought we to take chances?"

"I cannot sanction it," replied Trevanion, speaking slowly. "Manuel has proved faithful and discreet. We have to trust some one; besides, the arrangement you suggest is ungrateful and—pardon me, general—treacherous. Manuel has served us well and it is but a poor return to deal with him as you suggest."

"Well, well, have it as you wish," assented the President. "I would remark, however, that the extension of consideration to persons of his class, while attractive from the standpoint of magnanimity, may often prove expensive in the end. My experience has demonstrated the truth of the adage relative to dead men as talebearers. Trevanion, they are absolutely non-committal. A bullet, a spade and a few cubic feet of earth are my synonyms of vigilance. And the welfare of the republic is ever paramount." Trevanion smiled.

"Don't you consider the foisting into government service of Manuel's operations of rather sanguine appointment?" he asked.

"To the elect, all things are possible," responded the President with unction; "and we are likely to need those munitions to influence my re-election. Politics and saltpeter seem to hold a close relationship. Do not similar conditions exist in the States?"

"Scarcely in the radical sense you would imply. As I remember it, the gunpowder in our political demonstrations was confined exclusively to pyrotechnical display."

"Merely a question of climate and tendency," returned Juraz. "Peace comes but with the sword, you know, and peace in this republic has always been of elusive quality. Mark the fate of her rulers in the past. Patriots or traitors as her mood chanced to dispose."

"You are apprehensive?"

"Not apprehensive, Trevanion, but heedful of the signs. One develops prescient ability after three years of ad-

ministration of justice to this turbulent people. But I set my own limit, Trevanion. Two years hence, at the longest. A trainer of wild beasts should know when to quit the cage, and that will I. Then you, madam and I shall transfer the treasury of Quisadio to a more congenial clime and one better fitted to appreciate our many talents. Shall it be Madrid, or the Continent? How would Paris strike you? Ah, to be a boulevardier where once I was a vagrant! 'Tis a rapturous thought and quite within our realm. And to view madam gracing the society she is so well adapted to adorn! Hark, do I hear the sound of a *volante*? I'm rather expecting a call from the United States Consul."

"It's near to the time of his departure," remarked Trevanion. "He leaves to-day, does he not?"

"Yes, but— Enter!" in response to the sentry's knock.

The officer of the guard advanced and saluted.

"Your excellency, the prisoner Floyd requests an audience," said he.

The President turned to his papers. "My compliments to the prisoner, and say to him that I will send for him if I wish to see him," he replied, without looking up.

The man saluted and retired.

Trevanion had dropped his pen.

"Floyd," he began.

"Hush!" whispered Juraz, holding up a warning finger.

"Señor Sterling, the American Consul!" announced the sentry.

"To be sure," responded the President, nodding affably. "Admit the consul at once."

A short, stout man, urbanely side-whiskered, was ushered in. His naturally florid countenance was pink from heat and excitement, and he held his umbrella at an aggressive poise as he approached the President's table.

"Your excellency!"

"Señor Sterling," acknowledged the President. "I am honored to receive an additional and unexpected call from you. Might I be of any further service?"

"You may, indeed," responded the consul with emphasis. "I desire immediate information respecting the present whereabouts of Mr. James B. Floyd and shall esteem it a favor if you will impart the same."

The President tipped back restfully in his swivel chair. His half-closed eyes followed the motion of his visitor's umbrella tip, inscribing erratic tangents on the edge of the mahogany table.

"I am in haste, your excellency."

"Really, señor, I find it impossible to locate the gentleman on the instant. I'll make a special effort, however. He may be at the club. Trevanion, you will summon Vincente."

"Useless," returned the consul. "Floyd is not there. I investigated before coming to you. Neither is he at the dock where he should be by agreement. No one seems to have seen him since noon, when he left the club stables."

"Very singular," observed the President, thoughtfully.

"It is singular," rejoined the other, and there was an odd quiver in his tone.

"I remarked that no one had seen him since he left the club stables, about noon."

"You so remarked," affirmed the President, quietly.

"Excepting—" the consul paused abruptly.

"Indeed! excepting whom?" The President's black eyes were wide open now.

"I am led to infer, your excellency, that Floyd is being detained by your order. Is this a fact?"

"Señor Sterling, you discredit yourself in entertaining such a thought."

"I want a direct answer," retorted the consul, with warmth.

"And you have it," stated Juraz dispassionately. "I tell you that I am unable at this instant to furnish you with the desired information, but I promise to institute a thorough search of the port at once."

"The case is an urgent one," said the consul. "As you are aware, I must leave within the hour, and it is my duty



to obtain definite news of this man before I depart."

"That may not be possible," replied Juraz, with a negative shrug.

"Your excellency, the office of the *Courier-Libre* is closed. Was not that done by your order?"

"I grant you it was, but for political reasons. No personal animosity I assure you. Certain measures I deem a public necessity and such I enforce without fear or favor."

"But the man Floyd?" persisted the consul.

"You cannot consistently hold me responsible, at a moment's notice, for the itineracy of an individual. Señor Sterling, your contention is absurd! I have promised to investigate and you shall have news of the result promptly."

"Have you any objection to my communicating the circumstances to my government?"

"Not the slightest," returned the President, blandly. "However, to save you needless trouble, I will inform you that the telegraph is not in working order to-day. As yet I have failed to receive my official dispatches from abroad. It is very annoying."

The consul's teeth clicked together ominously.

"President Juraz, it is rumored you are holding Floyd a prisoner. If this be a fact you are placing yourself in grave position with the United States Government. If this be a fact, sir, you——"

"Señor Sterling," interrupted the President, "one in your position should not give credence to mere rumor. This country abounds in rumors. Nothing could be more prolific."

"Mr. Trevanion!" exclaimed the consul, turning to the secretary, "I appeal to you. You are or were an American. I believe Floyd to be held here against his will and contrary to international law. You see my strait. I entreat you, give me some definite statement."

"I refer you to President Juraz," responded Trevanion coldly.

The consul strode to the door.

"I shall notify the authorities at Washington of the facts in this case,

from the first port we touch!" he exclaimed vehemently.

"Quite right, Señor Sterling," responded the President, approvingly. "That course, my dear señor, becomes at once your privilege and your duty. *Adios, mio amigo, adios.*"

In silence Trevanion and Juraz listened to the descending steps, the sentry's challenge below, the officer's word of indorsement, the roll of a vehicle and the clatter of hoofs.

Most pregnant to Trevanion's deduction during this brief period was the realization that he had hopelessly antagonized the father of the woman whom, despite the event of the morning, he cherished with an adoration that seemed to thrive best in abject sterility. Yet, so evenly poised was the acumen of this man, that a moment later he was smiling over the capricious logic that had magnified his own futile conceit above Floyd's evident peril, the consul's official displeasure and Juraz's significant duplicity.

The smile lingered on his lips as he turned to the President.

"You are detaining Floyd?"

"Yes," replied the President; "I ordered his arrest this morning and the guard brought him in an hour ago. They took him in the plaza, giving him no opportunity to create confusion. I question if any one save myself observed the incident. I viewed it from the window here. I've no doubt he is protesting violently by now. All of his personal effects are on the *Orinoco*. He was just leaving, you see. I should think he would protest. Ha, ha!" and the President laughed immoderately.

Trevanion moved a step nearer.

"On what charge?"

"Charge?" inquired the President. "Charge? Oh, you mean accusation. Ah, well—'circulating an obnoxious publication and inflaming the public mind.' I have suppressed his seditious sheet and I mean to suppress him."

"The *Courier-Libre* has been quite conservative in tone of policy," stated Trevanion, quietly.

"Most certainly it has since my absolute assumption of affairs, but how be-

fore? Was I not cartooned, caricatured and vilified by his wretched, slanderous paper? When I became powerful, he began to fawn and cajole, but Juraz does not forget. He has drunk my wine, smoked my cigars and laughed at my jests, and all the time I watched him as a cat watches her prey. Now, I have my claws on him."

"Did you not grant him passports?" asked Trevanion.

"To be sure," replied the President, "but what of that? They can be removed from his body readily enough, afterward."

"You will execute him?"

"Assuredly, and with no loss of time. He dies to-night."

"But his government?" protested Trevanion. "Floyd is not a citizen of Quisadio. Your vengeance may cost you dearly. A warship stationed five miles out could easily blow us into chaos. His government is certain to demand reprisal and indemnity."

"Let it demand," responded Juraz. "Do you fancy I shall forward a certificate of Floyd's demise? His government shall be furnished a full and certified statement. Floyd will have been seen in Ecuador. If necessity urge, I am provided with a cartel of the recreant one, taken in Bolivia with the Liberator's monument for a background. It is a dim likeness, and as a matter of fact was not posed for by Floyd, but will serve the exigency of the case and my desire to assuage official solicitude. Listen! Old Sterling leaves to-day on the *Orinoco* for an extended vacation, and his substitute, if one be appointed—a doubtful contingency—will be totally ignorant of Floyd's identity. By the time the regular consul returns to his post, our blithe editor will be a mass of mold and less than a memory. This man is my legitimate prey. I have him under my palm, and I'll crush him, thus," and he rolled a sheet of paper into a dirty wad.

Trevanion stepped to the window and looked out. The hot, equatorial sun shone brightly, the marble wall reflecting its dazzling glare. A loathsome cell below held the whilom friend who had

wrought havoc with the one idyl of his reckless, unprofitable life. Vengeance upon Floyd was relegated to another's hands. His hours were numbered; his doom fixed and certain.

Trevanion recalled the laughing parting of that morning to which he had been an unwilling listener. At that moment he might have envied Floyd, but now—the mockery of it! "Farewell," it had been, but they did not know. He was almost conscious of a sense of pity for the wretched man beneath his feet. He thought of the degradation the day had brought to him. "Dishonored!" "Outlawed!" The words seemed branded on his heart! The bitter shame of it! Such condemnation, and from her whom his every thought had held in consecration! His soul writhed in revolt, yet admitted a willingness to kiss the hand that smote him.

Before him stretched the plaza with its expanse of semi-shade, stilted statuary and white pavilion. Within that confine, he had, during the last revolution, seen men die like sheep in shambles, not for the lofty inspiration of patriotism nor at the call of loyalty, but for the mere magnetism of a man's personality and name. A mist came into his eyes. The hot, glazed view swam before him. He glanced in Juraz's direction. The President sat smoking. Imperturbable, implacable and unscrupulous, yet often responsive to an appeal from Trevanion.

Trevanion turned from the window and, seating himself at his desk, began writing hurriedly. The first effusion he folded and placed at one side; the second he wrote with more care and read it before inclosing and addressing; the last, a mere slip, was held in his hand as he approached the President and stood facing him with the table littered with documents, between them.

"General," he said, "as a special favor to me, release Floyd. Expel, deport him, if you choose, under penalty if he dare return, but do not use the extreme measure. It is certain to react. Alive and banished, he is harmless, but dead, he may be the cause of much injury to you—to us. Let him go!"

"Never!"

"General, I beg you to make this concession to me, to me personally. Floyd is my friend and his condign disposal will severely test my own loyalty. Do not put me to it, general. I pray you, let him go. How can his death profit you?"

The President's brow lined darkly.

"Trevanion, say no more! I have waited patiently for this hour and I will not be thwarted. Even were his government to present a summary demand for his release, it would not move me."

"Then, as there seems no alternative," the words came clear and distinct, "will this move you?"

The President of Quisadio was gazing into the barrel of Trevanion's six-shooter and instinctively he recoiled.

"Trevanion! Are you insane?"

"Not insane! Don't raise your voice. Hands on table, please, and sit perfectly quiet. Quiet! That's it. Now sign this order for Floyd's instant release."

"Trevanion!"

"I give you one minute to sign it."

"And if I refuse?"

"I'll give you a passport to hell and Quisadio a new dictator. Are you going to sign?"

"Trevanion, I have been your benefactor!"

"Yes, and you have put the finishing touch to my highly creditable career. That plea won't serve, general. You would cut a man's throat and term yourself his benefactor. Sign!"

The President affixed his signature.

"Correct! Now keep your hands on the table and face this way. You know that my aim is sure, general. One syllable of an attempt to call and I'll be alone to explain."

He backed toward the door, pausing at his desk for the letter and the folded note.

"Sentry! Call the officer of the guard."

"Sergeant, here is the President's order for the immediate release of Mr. Floyd. Put it into effect at once. Attend to it in person and hand to him this letter and note. At once, remember!"

The man hurried away and again Trevanion faced Juraz.

"How long to you propose to detain me?" asked the President.

"Until Floyd can reach the dock. A brief period should suffice. Make yourself comfortable, general. Have a fresh cigar. No, I'll hold the light." He backed to the window.

"They certainly have acted with promptness. Your men obey orders with celerity, general. You are to be complimented on their perfect training. Over the hill. He should make it easily. He must, for she's scheduled to leave now."

He seated himself opposite the President.

"Now, general, Floyd is safely away, but you still have me." Juraz smiled grimly.

"Yes, I've been wondering how you expect to win out."

"Well, candidly," replied Trevanion, "I haven't given it much thought, but there is a way, you see."

"I don't see it," said the President, laconically.

"To shoot you in your chair," responded Trevanion. "Sit still, I don't intend to do it, however beneficially it might result in giving the people of Quisadio a less barbarous administration. General, you know the rules of poker. In the country which once owned but now disclaims me, no true gentleman will bet on a sure hand. I would like an expression of your sentiment in regard to such a contingency. Would you do it?"

Juraz was silent.

"You hold high cards against me, general. Give me a chance to help my hand. The *Orinoco* is past due to leave. Allow me but ten minutes in which to reach her before ordering pursuit, and if you can take me after that term of grace expires, I'm your man."

Juraz looked into Trevanion's eyes.

"A new deal is not to be considered," he remarked contemplatively. "One country is too small to hold us both and I rule here. That, of course, you will concede."

"I never questioned it."

"I yield to your present advantage, but do you realize that even though you succeed in reaching the *Orinoco*, Sterling will probably have you in irons before you are outside the harbor?"

"I suppose so, but it's a choice between that and the trap-shooting, which I admit I don't like. General, I'm cloyed with the sweets of life and I wouldn't buy my life back at the price of that of the meanest sluggard in Quisadio, much less the sacrifice of your own, that another in my place might deem an equitable forfeit. But a fighting chance I want, and—" jerking out his watch impatiently—"every passing second lessens that chance." A rasping catch was discernible in the normally even tone.

"You shall have it," said the President softly. "Ten minutes from the instant you pass that door, on my honor. I bid you adieu, for, in either case, I shall not see you again. Wish you luck in the draw." Trevanion was gone.

The President waited the full limit before he stepped into the corridor. His instructions to the pursuing squad were terse:

"Take the American Trevanion, dead or alive. You will find him in the direction of the wharf. Expose yourselves to no hazard in effecting capture. He is desperate."

When Trevanion reached the summit which declined gracefully to the low dock line he beheld the *Orinoco*, with a broad margin of blue between her white side and the wharf, the billow of smoke from her funnels streaming well astern.

"Floyd is less generous even than Juraz. She won't receive my letter. Well, nothing remains now but a wall to my back and the rest of it."

He veered to the left and, hurrying along the narrow, sandy street, soon reached the outskirts of the town. Here, making another detour, and hastening his pace to a run, he crossed a small coffee field and entered an inclosure, in the center of which stood a structure having the external appearance of a stockade.

It was the provincial amphitheater

for bull-fighting, virtually isolated from the town and deserted, save on the gala days of its service for the diversion.

Trevanion opened the gate which gave entrance to the space beneath the seats and led to the dressing-rooms, the bull pens and to the gilded archway through which the performers reached the arena, then he paused and looked back. Spurring across the coffee field were the troopers, their weapons glinting against the somber background. They were riding compact and without parade, an obvious portent that the quarry had ceased to be an object of quest, their animus being simplified to the minimum of undertaking to close with the fugitive in a manner most favorable to their own security.

Trevanion passed in and crossing the arena chose a position facing the main entrance. All around was the circle of wooden benches and boxes, ranging in tiers high above him. The place swarmed with flies and the air was pungent with the stench of putrid offal and dried blood. Myriads of maggots throbbed in the sand at his feet.

He was dusty and heated from the unwonted exertion of running and his breath came in quick, painful gasps. Leaning, panting, against the upright planks which formed the base of the ring's bulwark, he placed his right hand over his heart and strove by an effort at more regular breathing to check its angry palpitation.

"Spoil my aim!" he said, breathlessly.

Directly in line with his vision and surmounting the passage area, arose the elaborately caparisoned inclosure, reserved to the use of the chief executive. From the exclusiveness of its interior, Trevanion, on numerous occasions, had viewed the progress of a fight. The graceful, dexterous movements of the agile matador, waving and bowing ostentatiously to his demonstrative following; the disemboweled horse, rolling and plunging in its last agony; the stolid bull, charging with blind, impetuous fury upon the flaunted red, to win a fresh compliment of barbs, or to feel the keen edge of finishing steel.

As its occupant he had received much

obsequious attention, for the extent of his influence behind the throne was an acknowledged and patronized factor—this prestige the result of his own unaided effort, in an alien environment arrayed against him by the prejudice incident to difference in race, language and custom.

Memories long stifled thronged his brain. Subtle strains of the music of a happier, holier period filled his ears. Those glorious college days, replete with youthful triumphs—leader of his clique and fraternity, always daring, never failing in diplomacy.

Ah, God! Unfettered among his own what might he not have been! And that last bad hour in the library at home. The stern parent's denunciation, "Not one penny to save you from the devil, you young scoundrel! I'll be glad to see you in the stripes. You've had your day with extensions. You can go hang! I wouldn't lift a finger to prevent it—"

There was no gentle mediator to advocate an appeal. The All-wise had been infinitely gracious to Trevanion's mother and the intuition prompting a lenient course in dealing with motherless boys was a clement principle which Trevanion's father could not fathom. To die, and like a baited dog! One little hour ago and this same squad would have obeyed, unquestioningly, his very gesture. Now the brief tenure of his existence depended on their prowess. Was it a dream? Impossible that this hunted wretch could be himself—Trevanion!

Hark! The jingle of accouterment and the thud of men dismounting, then the restrained, guttural tones of a hasty consultation. The moment had come and his life was the price of that idealistic, sentimental fantasy. Too dearly bought? He was smiling now and tossing back the profusion of rumpled hair from his damp forehead, he shifted the revolver to his right hand. "My chance, Mildred," he murmured.

He stood listening intently to the sound of scrambling as the men tried to scale the outside wall and thus gain a vantage point among the seats. The

effort seemingly failed, and there was silence and suspense for a short time. Then they rushed the entrance with a yell, but paused beneath the blazoned archway in evident fear and indecision.

For a moment they blinked vacantly at him, across the intervening stretch of shining sand, for the glare of the sun was in their eyes. A moment only, then they raised their rifles.

"Surrender, Americano!" they shouted.

For reply Trevanion leveled his revolver.

Under the shade of an awning, on the cabin deck of the *Orinoco*, close by the netted guard rail, with Floyd beside her, Miss Sterling sat reading Trevanion's letter:

"It is proverbial that opportunity comes once to every man. God gives mine to-day and I gratefully accept the means to retrieval. This letter reaching your hands will be evidence that I have done my best. May it not, in some measure, atone? What you said this morning was all true and your condemnation only just. I ought never to have presumed to your friendship and my retribution is a fitting penalty, but you cannot realize the power of your influence for good. To me, it is a power revered and sanctified—my redeeming hope.

TREVANION."

She read the letter aloud to Floyd.

"Atone," she repeated. "What would he imply by that? Do you fancy he had anything to do with effecting your release?"

"It is quite possible," replied Floyd. "In some instances, Trevanion's influence over Juraz has been remarkably potent. He may have used it in my behalf."

"Far more likely that he connived at your arrest and the President refused to sanction it," was her answer. "Atone, indeed!" The letter was crushed in her hand.

She leaned toward him. His arm was about her. "But, dear, I have you, and he has passed forever from our lives." As she spoke, the reverberating echo of a desultory volley came dully from the shore.

"Did you hear that?" she asked, with a start.

"Yes," responded Floyd, carelessly. "More target practice probably. They're at it almost constantly; that is, when they're not shooting down some blind-folded wretch. I suppose it's part of Juraz's scheme to keep the mind of his diminutive army diverted from the back pay he owes it. I never heard of such a country for shooting."

The lovers passed to the stern, and leaning over the rail watched the broad swell line grow in the wake of the steamer.

The course of the *Orinoco* held close to the coast, which now arose in abrupt cliffs to her leeward. Far above, on the very apex of the hill, the executive mansion, a squared, white pile against the azure sky, was visible. The flag of Quisadio floated over it. The captain of the steamer approached.

"Do you see the flag?" he asked. "I mean the black rag just beneath the other? Take the glass and you can see it. That is old Juraz's conventional way of giving notification of an execution. When you see the black flag, you know it's done."

"I'm quite familiar with the meaning of that flag," observed Floyd. "You see, I'm an ex-resident here. Take a look at it through the glass, Mildred. I wonder who it can be this time, captain. I've heard of nothing serious for the past few days."

"They were speaking about an important political arrest made to-day," responded the captain. "I heard it casually mentioned at the Customs. Paid no attention, for that sort of thing is chronic here. Printer, stenographer or somebody of that ilk. Anyhow, I couldn't see the political connection; but, Lord, anybody to stop a bullet would satisfy Juraz's idea of a capital offender," and the captain went forward.

Floyd and Miss Sterling were staring at each other in vague amazement. To the dazed comprehension of each, the captain's description found application in Floyd's recent experience, and he was now free and safe.

A suspicion of the truth came first to the man.

"Let us read that letter again!" he exclaimed, and as the girl slowly straightened the crumpled sheet a gleam of recant memory awoke in him, and he grew pale to the very lips.

"I say, Mildred," he faltered. "There was another—handed me with this—a folded bit of paper. What did I do with it?" He was searching his pockets. "Ah, here it is! Heavens, if it should be that—"

Together they read the brief missive aloud, with the swirl of foam spurned by the steamer's powerful propeller accompanying:

"I am about to attempt your release by force and single-handed. Do not lose an instant. Ask captain of *Orinoco* to delay departure twenty minutes following your arrival and be prepared to protect me, as a fugitive, if I come. At the end of that interval further wait will be useless. In that case please deliver accompanying letter to Miss Sterling. TREVANION."

For a moment, Floyd was speechless, meeting the horror in her eyes, then:

"My God! Mildred, I did not know! How could I have known? The time was so short, I had to fairly run. And he—"

"Pray don't talk to me now. Not just now. No, I do not blame you. I do not, truly, but please leave me for a little. Oh! I treated him so unkindly this very morning, so ungratefully!"

The creased, wrinkled page held in her hand blotted and blurred as she attempted to read again Trevanion's last words to her, while her tears fell fast.

At that same moment a flock of buzzards were circling dismally above the arena, where, supine in the reeking sand, with upturned face fast darkening in the tropical sun to a sinister bronze, lay the man whose hopeless love inspired those lines.

The hand that penned them still tightly gripped the revolver that had ransomed Floyd, and the bullet accomplishing Trevanion's redemption had torn through the folds of a dainty white glove to reach his heart.



# THE POWER OF WOMAN

By Una Hudson

I STIRRED my tea thoughtfully and looked at Patricia over my teacup.

She is very good to look at, is Patricia, being a widow in the first stages of mitigated grief.

I have known Patricia for a very long time. In saying this I do not, however, wish to seem to insinuate that Patricia is burdened with years. On the contrary, she is well under thirty and looks even younger than she really is. But I have watched her develop from a lanky girl with too many arms and legs, into a very beautiful and graceful young woman; so, surely, I am well within the truth when I lay claim to having known her for a long time.

"The power of woman," I said, apropos of nothing at all, "is very greatly overrated."

I confess that I said this not without malice prepense. It is by means of just such remarks that I have perfected in Patricia that spiciness of temper so charming in a woman.

I was pleased to observe that she at once followed my lead.

"You are entirely mistaken," she said, perhaps a trifle more aggressively than the occasion seemed to warrant. "Any woman can get anything she wants from any man if she only goes about it in the right way."

This sounded interesting.

"Prove it," I said, judicially.

Patricia was all animation. Her cheeks were pink, her eyes bright, and she was very, very pretty. I confess I am rather susceptible to beauty in women.

"I will," she said, determinedly. "I will decide upon something that I want you to do, and then I will make you do it."

"Of course," I suggested persuasively, "you will tell me what the 'something' is."

"Certainly not," Patricia said, flatly.

"But," I said, bewildered, "if I don't know what it is you want me to do, how on earth am I to do it?"

"You will do it," Patricia told me, "because you *don't* know what it is I want. If you knew, you very probably wouldn't do it."

"I suppose," I said, discontentedly, "I will have to see you a lot."

"It's not at all necessary," Patricia assured me, cheerfully.

Whereupon I immediately decided that I would call upon her quite often. It seemed only fair to give her every chance in the world, the more so that it was my private opinion that she had undertaken rather a large contract.

It did not appear to me that Patricia was making any special effort to induce me to do "something." I intimated as much to her. She smiled wisely and asked if I had made all my appointments.

I have neglected to state that I had managed to secure a rather responsible political position, attached to which there was considerable patronage.

I thought that remark of Patricia's very tactless and unmistakably obvious.

"My dear girl," I said, stiffly, "who is your *protégé*? And which particular 'job' do you wish him to have? You should have told me at once without circumlocution that a 'job' was the 'something' you wanted."

Patricia lay back in her chair and laughed till the tears rolled down her cheeks.

"You precious old goose," she said, when she was able to express herself coherently, "I don't want a 'job' for any one. The thing I want is exclusively for my own use and pleasure. But I think," she went on, with sudden gravity, "that it is very horrid of you to assume that my ultimate purpose was to 'work' you for a job for some friend of mine."

I apologized abjectly and I told her how all my pride and pleasure in my recently acquired prestige had turned to bitterness because of the attitude of my so-called friends in respect to those same "jobs." The number of applicants for each place was positively appalling. And whenever I was made the recipient of any little friendly courtesy, I had come to believe that somewhere tagged to it I would find that odious and everlasting request for a "job."

I told her, too, what a joy it was to know that there was one person whose friendship for me was entirely disinterested. That seemed to please Patricia. She let me hold her hand for quite a long time when I bade her goodbye. She has a very charming hand, has Patricia. I think it is what a palmist would call a "psychic hand." When you hold it it sends little, warm thrills all over your body. I think I shall try holding it again; that is, of course, if Patricia will permit me.

I think, too, that I will cultivate the habit of sending her an occasional bunch of flowers or box of candy. While I was calling on her this evening a box came from the florist's. It contained carnations. Patricia said they were a new variety and very beautiful. I confess I did not greatly admire them: pale yellow they were, with pink edges. Somehow, they quite set my teeth on edge. I suppose it was the inartistic combination of yellow and pink. And there were so many of them! Such a vulgarly large bunch! They were from a man I particularly detest, too; and Patricia wrote him a note of thanks right then and there, and actually made me telephone for a messenger boy. She seemed to think it of vital importance that that note should be delivered imme-

diately. For my part, I think it could very well have waited for the regular mail.

Decidedly as Patricia seems to be fond of flowers, I shall myself supply her with them in the future. And I'll send plenty of 'em, too; a regular sheaf of 'em—roses, carnations, lilies—every weed that grows. I'll outdo that odious Colonel Webster if I have to buy up a greenhouse to do it.

To-night as I was leaving my office the telephone bell rang. There was nothing surprising in that, for it had been ringing all day, but somehow, it set my nerves on edge.

I took down the receiver and inquired in no pleasant tone of voice what was wanted. It seemed that I was wanted—to dine with Patricia. All my ill-humor vanished instantly. The prospect of spending the whole evening in peace and quiet where I wouldn't be tackled for a "job" at every turn, was like a small piece of Paradise, and not such a very small piece, either. I told Patricia so while we waited for the fish to be brought in. Her answer was characteristic.

"I hate to eat alone," she said. "A dinner without a man at the head of the table is very much like a potato without salt."

I couldn't think of anything suitable to say in return, but I admitted to myself that a dinner table without a pretty woman at one end of it was nothing less than a hideous mistake. And it occurred to me that it would be very pleasant to have Patricia at one end of my dinner table.

So well, indeed, did I like the idea, that in the library after dinner I asked her to marry me. One must, to a certain extent, consider the *convenances*, and there really seemed no other way in which I could induce her to preside over my dinner table. But I may as well confess that I had suddenly found myself very much in love with Patricia.

Her answer was more than a little disconcerting. She began to sob violently, and I came to the conclusion that

I had been too abrupt. By way of atoning for the abruptness I took her in my arms and kissed her and told her how much I loved her. All of which had the effect of making her, if possible, cry harder than ever.

I was at my wits' end.

"My dear girl," I cried, distractedly, "what *is* the matter?"

To which Patricia replied, in a choked voice:

"Nothing."

Now, I have observed that when a woman tells you that "nothing" is the matter, you may safely make up your mind that a very great deal is the matter.

I kissed Patricia again, and I thought that she did not particularly object to my caresses. On the contrary, she seemed rather to invite them.

"Dear," I said, very gently, "is it that you don't love me?"

She shook her head.

"Then," I said, "won't you marry me, dear?"

"I—I c—can't," Patricia wailed, "because that was the 'something' I wanted you to do. And now I'll always think that you proposed to me because I made you, and not because you really loved me."

"My dear child," I said, "that is utterly absurd. You did not influence me in the very least. I have acted entirely of my own free will."

And before I left, Patricia accepted this view of the matter. At any rate, she permitted me to take the measure of her engagement finger.

But between us the "power of woman" is still a much mooted question.



## THE CONSPIRATORS

COME, Death, sit down with me,  
Thou and Love, we three,  
In a sad conspiracy  
Against Life, our enemy.

Thine, Death, the briefer score,  
Though she hate thee evermore.  
Hate of hers is less sore  
Than her treasons, honeyed o'er  
With old, sweet lies and false, sweet lore.  
Whom she hurts thou healest, Death.  
That is what she hates thee for.

Thine, Love, the bitterest plaint.  
She has kissed thee, fooled thee, shamed thee,  
Clasped thee, disclaimed thee;  
Found thee white, child and saint,  
Left thee with the world's taint;  
Found thee strong, left thee faint,  
Used thee, and defamed thee.

I, who love Life, needs must live;  
But, loving most, can least forgive.

Leave her, Love! Forsake her, Death!  
So shall men come to curse their breath.

CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS.

# PERDITA

By Florence Holmes Beach

Hollis' Farm,  
Cayuka Lake,  
June 5th.

**M**Y DEAR ADELE: Yes, I am here, rustivating among the pigs and cows. I decided to come in a great hurry, and rushed here before I could unmake my mind.

After all, as you said, it's no good going to see a doctor if you don't follow his advice.

The worst of it is, doctors always give such horrid prescriptions. I would rather have taken quarts of medicine than come here and rest.

As a matter of truth, one couldn't possibly do anything here except rest, for there is absolutely nothing to do. I get up in the morning and lounge about till dinner time (country hours!) and then lounge about again until tea time. The most exciting event that can happen is the killing of a pig or the hatching of a brood of chickens. Such an event provides conversation for days! The election of a new President would not be half so interesting. I wake up in the morning to the sound of the cockcrow, instead of the thumping of Mary's fist upon the door. When I come down I feel a strange emptiness in life—no, Adele, not hunger, although my appetite would appall a boarding-house keeper—there is no mail! I have not let any one know where I am, and just don't you do so. The mail is fatal to a rest cure. Only on you I rely for all the news.

I did not want it noised about that I am staying here, so Mrs. Hollis has given out that I am her niece come to pay her a visit.

Tell me, was Bobby Hirsch awfully

mad with me for throwing up the part? I didn't dare face him—I just fled! He told me once that I gave him more trouble than all the rest of the company put together! I'd have given a hundred dollars to have seen him when he read my resignation. I can imagine him strutting up and down the room, waving the letter and stuttering wildly. The girls must have had a real lovely time at rehearsal. Of course, Lulu Hessler was delighted—she has always been crazy to get the part. I believe she has hoodooed me; she was always watching me from the wings like a small hungry dog watching a big dog eat a bone. I'll never have her for an understudy again. Well, now she has got the bone. Does the public enthuse over her jerks and her ankles? Oh! she's bully—in her own ideas. And doesn't she love an *ingénue rôle*? The cowlike stare and simper are great!

Now, I must turn my thoughts from civilization, or I shall get excited. Let us return to the pigs and cows! Mrs. Hollis is an old dear—fat, bustling and motherly. She looks on me as a little girl. I guess that's because she nursed my mother. I am always expecting that she will put me in pinafores and wash my face for me.

By the by, I shall shed all my ladylike airs. I am wearing some old cotton frocks belonging to Mrs. Hollis' daughter who is away for the summer. They are guiltless of fit, and come way above my ankles. I am giving my hair a sun bath, just letting it hang in a big plait. The country maid, when crowned by a sunbonnet, could not be told from the genuine article.

Oh! I have forgotten to tell you one

item that may make for a little interest. There is a small cottage nearby, the only inhabitant for miles, and on the porch yesterday I discovered an Englishman! A very stiff, polite, proper young Englishman! I was taking a basket of strawberries to the cottage for Mrs. Hollis, and walked up to the porch, which is all covered with vines—you can't see inside till you get there—and came right upon him suddenly. He was surrounded by fat, stupid-looking books, and looked very much occupied. He stood up most politely when I went through—a farm girl, you know!—and pushed open the door for me. I gave a little curtsy and said, "Thank you, sir," just as I do in "The Old Home." You remember?

Perhaps, after all, I might vary the company of the pigs and cows? I should not be surprised to hear that he inquired—in a casual way, mind you—where I came from.

Mrs. Hollis tells me that he is staying for complete quiet at the cottage, in order to study. Well, there are many things in the world that may be studied.

Good-by; give my love to all the boys; tell them I'll be back in the fall for sure. Write soon. Yours,

STELLA.

The White Cottage,  
Cayuka Lake,  
June 7th.

MY DEAR ROBSON: First I must apologize for not writing before.

It was unpardonably rude of me, I know, but I have never really settled down once since I left England until now. I have been a bird on the wing, seeking a quiet place where I may make my nest. Now I have found it, after two months' search. A quiet place is not an easy "find" here in America, but I hope now I may accomplish some work without disturbance or excitement.

You will no doubt expect to hear my impressions of America. I have but one impression—noise, excitement, feverish activity. I stayed a couple of weeks in New York, in order to present

some introductions my father gave me, and also to transact a little business. I hope I may never stay there again. Any serious study or reflection was entirely out of the question. My friends—or, I should say, my father's friends, for under no circumstances could they be mine—rushed me around to the various sights, races, theatres, etc., until I was so unutterably weary and brain-stupid that I made, I fear, an untruthful excuse to get away. My father, of course, would have reveled in this pursuit of pleasure—how did I come to be my father's son?

You know, do you not, that I took this trip at my father's desire. He explained that he wanted me to come to New York to transact a little business for him—business which might have been quite satisfactorily arranged by letter. Privately, he told my sister that I needed waking up, that I was becoming dull and tedious, and must be pushed into society. Society is his one idea of life; he cannot understand that I might possibly be interested in anything else. Also he was anxious that I should marry Lady Marian Hilyard, which I flatly refused to do on the ground that I did not love her. I shall never marry a woman of the world, nor, like my brother George, philander with actresses and women of such character, and these views I emphatically laid before my father. This produced a coolness between us.

Perhaps I shall never marry; perhaps the woman of my dreams is not flesh and blood, nor ever will be. The woman who is innocent and unsophisticated seems to have departed with the age of crinolines and curls. Certainly if she exists in some out-of-the-way village in England, she is far from the land of America. The loud voiced, athletic woman who dominates her household and husband, here reigns supreme. The woman I marry must pervade, not dominate, her household with the charm of purity and sweetness, as a subtle odor that is wafted o'er a garden in the cool of the evening. But there, you know my "cranks," as my father says.

Meanwhile, I am getting on with my book. I have not decided on a title for it yet. Perhaps I may call it "A Critical Study of Shakespeare's Heroines." The writing is to me a labor of love. I fall in love with every heroine in her turn. Here in a wilderness of flowers and foliage, with myriads of birds and beautiful, many-colored insects, I try to write a book that shall not be unworthy of the subject. All is peaceful and quiet—no other house for miles, except a farm nearby. From thence one hears the subdued "cluck cluck" of the hens, the distant "moo" of the cows in the meadows, perchance a nasal grunt from the pig! An animate picture.

I thought I must be dreaming this morning, when out of the golden sunshine into the cool, green porch where I was sitting, stepped a beautiful milk-maid—like a morning-glory—with a basket of strawberries on her arm. Her superb figure was clothed in some loose, white stuff, and hanging down her back was a long, thick plait of the real Titian color. She was startled to find me there, and her big, violet-blue eyes, the color of the pansies at the foot of the porch, opened wide with astonishment. Then with true rustic civility, now, alas, so rare, she curtsied prettily and disappeared into—I suppose—the mysteries of the kitchen. I think I ate some of the strawberries for dinner. How a New York beauty would envy her hair and her eyes, her grace of carriage and beautiful complexion? The supposed beauties, who figure on placards, would fade away before her into nothingness. She comes, I know, from the farm nearby, for I watched her crossing the meadow, the sun glittering on her hair until it looked like a rope of fire.

All this sounds very rustic, does it not? I hope it does not bore you, for I have nothing else to tell you, nor do I expect anything to happen. By the by, I am not supposed to be here at all. My father thinks I am in New York, where all my letters are addressed, so do not give away the secret.

Good-by, old fellow, all good wishes.

Yours very sincerely,

CREIGHTON.

Hollis' Farm,  
Cayuka Lake,

June 15th.

MY DEAR ADELE: I should think you *did* write me in a hurry; I thought at first that the letter was written in a sprawling variety of shorthand. Awfully sorry to hear the heat has been so bad in N. Y.; the air is quite fresh here.

No, Dick Loman cannot have my address. I don't want to hear from him, or any of the boys. You can tell them that if they miss me awfully. I don't miss them at all. I am tired of "boys"; I like cows and pigs better—for a change.

Oh! what a bully description you gave of Lulu's appearance last week. It must have been really funny. I laughed and laughed till I felt tired. That's the worst of wearing wigs! Serves her right for daring to imitate my hair. Give her my love.

I think it is very vulgar of you, asking to hear the developments of my flirtation. It is not a flirtation at all; it is an idyl! No, really, if you knew my Englishman you would never even think of the verb "to flirt." I didn't mean to say "my Englishman"; in fact, I didn't intend to tell you anything more about him. I just hate curiosity! But I suppose now I must.

Of course, I have met scores of Englishmen before, as you say, but never one quite like this. Nothing so dignified and—I don't know the word. I want a word that expresses every degree of sedateness, reserve, pride and dignity! I feel as though I had discovered some curious plant—never before catalogued in America—growing by the wayside. But I had better give you the links in the chain.

The night before last Mrs. Hollis and I were sitting out on the steps shelling peas (oh, yes, I sustain the character thoroughly). Mrs. Thomas, who keeps the cottage, came puffing and panting like an automobile up the garden path. It reminded me of New York. When she had overflowed into a chair, and regained her breath, she unfolded to us the object of her visit. She explained



that she was going to start preserving her strawberries on the next day, and could Mrs. Hollis lend her one of the farm girls for a couple of days. Mrs. Hollis was very sorry, but she couldn't possibly spare one; she was much too busy herself. I went on shelling peas—pop, pop. I said: "I am afraid I am not very smart, Mrs. Thomas,"—pop, pop—"but I'll come over and give you a hand"—pop, pop. Mrs. Hollis was just going to exclaim, when I upset the bowl of peas with my foot and took her attention away. As we were groveling after the peas, I whispered to her not to say anything. When we had captured all the peas that the dog couldn't eat in the time, Mrs. Thomas declared herself much obliged, and would I come over early in the morning?

I would, but not too early. The Englishman doesn't breakfast until half-past eight. I know, because I can see his blind go up when he leaves his room. So in the morning I put on a captivating blue sunbonnet—not belonging to Mrs. Hollis' daughter—and started out.

Mrs. Thomas wanted me to hull the strawberries in the kitchen. But I objected that the kitchen was much too hot, and that it would be cooler on the front veranda. Mrs. Thomas was horrified—Mr. Acland always sat there; he wouldn't like it. I had my own ideas about that, so I carried my point, and by the time the Englishman stepped out on the veranda with his books tucked under his arm, I was sitting on a low stool, with my sunbonnet thrown back, and a large basket of ripe-red strawberries beside me. He was evidently very much surprised to see me, and hesitated in the doorway a moment. I got up quickly and said, timidly: "Shall I be in your way, sir?" and took hold of the basket as if to go indoors. He put out his hand. "No, no, certainly not; there is plenty of room for us both." Then he favored me with a superior kind of smile, the sort of smile a great, big cow might give a very small ant.

Have I described him? Well, I guess he would be considered nice-looking by some people. Tall and straight, and so

awfully clean-looking that he suggests baths, scrubbing brushes and soap. His eyes are deep set and dark gray, serious kind of eyes. Oh! and he has a fair mustache. Altogether not so bad as one might find at Cayuka Lake.

I noticed that he didn't get along very well with those fat old books; he seemed to be interested in the science of hulling strawberries. Presently he said, with the air of trying to be pleasant: "Those are very fine strawberries!" He looked so serious that I wondered if he were calculating how much a pound they would fetch, and wrestling with mental arithmetic. Englishmen are mercenary, aren't they? I answered: "Yes, indeed; would you like some?" and I held out the basket to him. He took some and thanked me. Always feed a man, you know! After that he condescended to be quite chatty, which made me feel so proud and good. Fancy a great English lord—he's something like that—talking to a simple country maid! Of course, I romanced pretty considerably about my aunt, Mrs. Hollis, and the years I had spent on the farm, and the work I did. I fancy he flattered himself he was drawing me out! Certainly he drew out a hithe to unsuspected fund of imagination! He said: "You are very lucky to live in such a pleasant, quiet place." I sighed. "I should so much like to go to New York," I said. "People tell me I should earn more money there."

"Child," he said, impressively, "New York is a modern Babylon; I hope you will never go there. You would wilt like a flower in the blazing sun." Have you seen any signs of wilting about me, Adele? I have noticed myself that money fades pretty quickly. After a while he said, dreamily: "Do you know I am just reading a beautiful play, the heroine of which is strangely like you." I pricked up my ears at that, for I thought perhaps it might be a fat part. I inquired what it was. "The Winter's Tale," he answered. "Oh! Shakespeare!" I said, contemptuously. He opened his eyes at this. "You know Shakespeare?" he said, in an astonished way. It was a slip on my part—but I

told the truth for once. I explained that my father was an artist, and that he used to read Shakespeare to me, and paint pictures from his plays. I heard him say quickly, under his breath: "Ah! that accounts for——" He inquired if my father was dead, and I told him "yes," that he died when I was twelve years old, and my mother died shortly after of heart-break. Poor, dear father; if he had lived he would never have let me go on the stage. But I had to earn my living somehow! What, I wonder, would he think of our extravaganzas and our show girls? The Englishman reminds me sometimes of him.

But let me return to the comedy. He talked to me of Perdita, the heroine of "The Winter's Tale," and I asked him if he would read some of the poetry to me. I thought that was the proper thing to do. So in the drowsy heat of the summer morning with the bees singing their song to the birds, and the strawberries all lying in a heap between us, he read the story of Perdita. And he thinks I resemble Perdita. If he only knew!

To-day I have been to Mrs. Thomas' again, and this time he did not attempt to work at his books. He just talked and looked. Oh! I am having a very amusing summer, after all. Much more fun than Atlantic City. Won't it be killing when he finds out who I am? "Miss Stella Delorme, the Queen of Comic Opera," in an *ingénue* part! Oh! Englishmen are delightfully simple.

Good-by, old girl. When do you go on your vacation? You can't come here; "two's company!"

Yours,

STELLA.

The White Cottage,  
Cayuka Lake,  
June 18th.

MY DEAR ROBSON: How could you doubt my reception of your news? I am simply delighted. What a blind old bat I was not to see that you cared for Lady Marian.

You are a good fellow, Robson, to have waited all this time in order not

to interfere with my courtship. It was never anything more than friendship. You both deserve every joy. May you get it!

I am not surprised to hear the news about Gerald. I always thought he would get into a mess with that vulgar woman. Actresses are always on the lookout to entangle young men. No chance, I am afraid, in appealing to her "better feelings," as you suggest. The stage very early kills all heart and soul. At least, this is my opinion. Certainly I have never studied a woman of this type closely, nor do I wish to.

Am I still contented here? Absolutely, my dear fellow. I could not be more fit and happy if I were in your shoes, in the first gladness of betrothal. It's very kind of you to speak so highly of my ability to write the "Studies." I wish I were as sure of that. After all, what can one man know of so many different types of character, so many beauties of mind and soul as Shakespeare portrays? I feel now as though it were presumption on my part to criticise and catalogue *any* woman. The best man of earth, which I am very, very far from being, could never hope to fathom or know the sweetness and purity of a good woman. And not because she hides her thoughts and feelings, for indeed how simple and transparent can a woman be, her every feeling mirrored in her eyes.

I have met women who were to me somewhat the embodiment of Shakespeare's heroines; I have known a Portia, a Desdemona, a Rosalind. But never until now have I chanced to find Perdita. She is here at Cayuka Lake—the beautiful milkmaid that I told you of. Since I wrote you I have had opportunities of talking with her, and finding out all about her, but, indeed, there is little to learn. She is

"The prettiest lowborn lass that ever  
Ran on the greensward; nothing she does  
or seems  
But smacks of something greater than her-  
self,  
Too noble for this place."

She is indeed a child of Nature; she

sits beside me hulling strawberries with the air of a princess. Her pretty fingers, stained pink with the juice of the strawberries, are soft and white. Her voice unlike the usual American voice, is sweet and low, and she speaks daintily, with the culture of Nature herself. Perhaps something of this may be accounted for by the fact that her father was a French artist. I wonder if he were happy with her lowborn mother? If she were anything like her daughter, and Perdita tells me she was very beautiful, he must have lived in Paradise. I have been reading Shakespeare to her. She is keenly appreciative. As she listens, her big eyes grow larger with delight and interest; she forgets her strawberries—I fear Mrs. Thomas will scold—and begs me to go on when I stop a while. What could one not do with so receptive and fresh a mind? She is like the tendril of a vine that may be adapted to any shape or form by the tender hand of the gardener.

It seems sad to think that she may marry some country lout, and become a farmer's wife, with no thought beyond pigs and cows. She may, alas, grow stout, her beautiful milk-white skin become red and roughened, her glossy hair uncared for. How splendid her hair must look when it is all unloosened from the great thick plait and falls around her shoulders. I could watch for hours the sunbeams playing hide and seek within its fastnesses, the glint of burnished copper, the shine of yellow gold!

Last night as I was strolling around by Hollis' farm I saw Perdita leaning over a gate and talking to a farm lad. I wonder—no, I think she could never care for him. I observed him this morning—I recognized him by an awful battered straw hat, through which his straight, tow-colored hair sticks up in places, like straw poking through a basket. His face was simply one huge freckle, in which his small, green eyes were obscured. He was taking his lunch, I suppose, a huge chunk of bread and meat wrapped up in a handkerchief which does duty for all purposes. Ugh!

will she, I wonder, ever wrap up his bread and meat for him when he starts out in the morning to his work? Would she, like her mother, die of a broken heart, if the lout should die?

Pardon me, my dear fellow, for boring you. This study of Perdita cannot be interesting to you, as it is to me. I am, I fear, a Shakespeare enthusiast to the exclusion of all else.

I do not know when I shall return. At present I am just browsing in the sun in a land peopled with the creatures of my imagination. I do not ever crave for the tea parties of London, or the delights of Henley. Some day when the sun bids Cayuka Lake "adieu" perhaps I may return.

Yours,  
CREIGHTON.

---

Hollis Farm,  
Cayuka Lake,  
August 20th.

MY DEAR ADELE: Your letter was just one long exclamation. My goodness, can't I throw up a part if I like, without everybody screaming? I will answer your interrogations one by one.

1. No, I am not ill. I am perfectly fit and aggressively healthy. The country has completely cured me.

2. I have not been offered a bigger salary by another manager, nor am I actuated by any ill feeling toward Hirsch.

3. I am not standing as a candidate for the next vacancy at the madhouse, and I have not had the sunstroke.

I don't see anything extraordinary in my action. I own I was very keen on taking the part when I read the play in the spring, but I have changed my mind since. I am just going to take a rest for a while, that is all. Don't try to poke for motives, when there are none. Lulu is quite welcome to the part. I don't care if New York does forget me. You ask if it is the influence of the pigs and cows. I don't know. I have spent a very pleasant summer, and I just hate to think of the noise and glare and perpetual bickering at the theatre. And,

anyway, Adele, that new opera is awfully cheap and bad taste, don't you know. All the bigger success, you say. Well, I know, but Lulu can have the glory. I'm not surprised to hear of the split with her husband. You know it's all very well for birds of a feather to flock together, but they shouldn't marry one another. I shall never marry a man who is tarred with the same brush as myself. Guess I shall never marry at all, for who would care for an actress? At least what good man would? Of course, there are actresses and—actresses, but somehow we all get gathered up in the same bunch, neither rare hothouse flowers or good, honest garden blooms. Perhaps if some of us were transplanted into a fresher, purer atmosphere, we might be found to be not so bad, after all.

I wonder if it is any satisfaction to the flower in the middle of the bunch to know it is a little better than most of its fellows, that it has grown up straight and honest? I suppose you'll think all this driveling more signs of madness.

Be sure and tell you more about the funny Englishman, you say. I don't think he's so funny. He has been ill since I wrote last, and I have been helping to nurse him. That's right, laugh, Adele! A new rôle for me—the ministering angel! The truth is that Mrs. Thomas is too stout to mount the stairs to his room very often, so I volunteered to help. What a curiously helpless thing a man is when he is ill. Even if you hated a man you would, I think, have to be good to him when he is ill. Not that I actually hate him, only he has such absurd ideas about woman and things, although I sometimes think he lives among dream women and not ordinary, everyday mortals like myself. For instance, for a few days he was delirious and he raved about Perdita (out of Shakespeare, you know), reciting whole pages off by heart. It was quite uncanny, especially as he imagined I was Perdita. I used to sit beside the little window with its frilled muslin curtains, while he would fix his eyes so earnestly upon me (he has grown so thin) and recite to me:

"You see, sweet maid, we marry  
A gentle scion to the wildest stock  
And make conceive a bark of baser kind  
By bud of nobler race; this is an art  
Which does mend nature,"

until I could almost have forgotten he was out of his mind, and did not know me at all. Sometimes he fancied I was his mother, and would catch hold of my hand and kiss it gently, saying: "Dearest mother, how good you are to me!" She is dead; he told me so.

Once he was so ill we thought he was going to die. Mrs. Thomas thought she ought to communicate with his relations, so we looked around his room, but could not discover any address to write to. There are two large photographs standing on his table, one the portrait of a girl and the other of a man. His chum and his sweetheart, I suppose! Of course, I don't know, but I feel positive she is the woman he loves. She is just the type of woman he would admire—the milk-and-water type. Some fine lady, I guess, brought up, oh, so carefully; just a simple, innocent baby. But men like that sort of woman, don't they? especially an Englishman. Of course, he is the only man she has ever loved—because she hasn't seen many men. When he goes back to England she will marry him, and they will be happy ever after in a goody-goody fashion. They will lead a placid, contented, cowlike existence. Wouldn't her ladyship be horrified to learn that her lover is at the mercy of that degenerate creature—an actress! She would immediately conjure up a picture of a weak, helpless invalid and a designing, fascinating woman who is drawing him into her clutches. Pooh! She needn't be afraid; some of us are not as black as we're painted. It's just like her cheek to imagine I would bestow a thought on him at all; but you can't let a lame dog lie in the ditch on the wrong side of the stile. Of course, it bores me to death—you can readily imagine that, can't you, Adele? He's so awfully simple. The English miss will always feel quite sure of him, and that's so uninteresting, isn't it? He is getting better now, so some day soon I am going to

spring my little bit of news upon him. That will relieve him of any feeling of gratitude he may feel toward me. I shall explain to him that it is *I* who owe him a debt of gratitude for the amusement he has afforded me during an idle summer. It has been, indeed, a pretty comedy, and the end is quite in keeping. Shake hands—I suppose he won't mind shaking hands with an actress—good-by—we shall never meet again. I return to my paint and my powder and a gaudy show in New York, he to his gentle, sweet ladylove.

By the by, I shall be leaving here shortly—I am tired of the place. I am not coming back to New York, though. I don't know where I shall go yet.

After the great scene with the Englishman, Miss Stella Delorme makes her exit! Stage traditions demand that it should be so. Good-by. Yours,  
STELLA.

---

White Cottage,  
Cayuka Lake,  
August 25th.

MY DEAR ROBSON: I have just read your last three letters, which have been handed to me all at once. You will no doubt be surprised at not having received answers to them. The reason for this is that I have been very ill for some weeks, but I am nearly well now. Perdita has brought "me back" to life. I can never tell you how good she has been to me, how untiring, how gentle. All through my delirium I was conscious of tender hands smoothing my pillow, of pitying eyes watching me. You always tell me that I idealize women—but I never imagined that a woman could be so near akin to an angel. She has worn herself out for a perfect stranger. One night I awoke—I think I must have been out of my mind for some time—and looked around. At first I thought I was alone, then I was conscious of a light breath on my cheek. I turned my head, and found poor, tired Perdita had fallen asleep with her head resting uneasily on

the edge of my pillow. Her face was white and worn; her red lips had lost their color. Almost touching my hand was the beautiful plait of hair. I wanted to kiss it, but I had not the strength to raise it to my lips. Then I think I must have lost consciousness again, for the next time I saw her she was standing by the little table preparing some dainty mess for me.

But now I am nearly well, and my convalescence has brought to me a great discovery. Perdita is not a little farm maid at all—nor is she a king's daughter in disguise—she is a star of comic opera from New York. How she must have laughed at me! What an insufferable prig she must think me!

I found out in this wise. The good Mrs. Thomas unearthed a pile of old magazines for my amusement. I turned over the pages idly. Soon I came to a picture at which I looked and looked again. A portrait of Perdita! Perdita as I first saw her, with a sun-bonnet on her head and a basket in her hand. The inscription underneath told me that it was a portrait of Miss Stella Delorme, starring in "The Old Home." The likeness was so perfect that recognition was inevitable. The child of Nature—the beautiful dairymaid—was not, and never had been. At first, I own, I was annoyed and angry at the deception which had been practiced upon me. Then on reflection I saw I had no right to be so. She had done me no wrong. She had, on the contrary, given me a delightful summer, and crowned all by nursing me back to life and health.

Then why was I angry? Ah! Robson, actress or dairymaid, I love her! I do not mind what she be, if only she will love me. I know, on the face of it, it sounds absurd, that I, Creighton Acland, should have laid my heart at the feet of a popular burlesque actress. I suppose all the people at home will be horrified. And the irony of it all—that my father should want me to be a little gayer, a little more a man of the world. I can hear Gerald's coarse little laugh.

But I do not concern myself with all this. Only one question worries me by

day and night. Does she care for me, could she ever be happy with a slow, dull fellow like myself? Now I am fain to wish that I had given more attention to the arts by which men gain a woman's love. Oh! what a fool I have been, delivering my highly proper opinions on actresses to her. I remember once when I made some especially virtuous remark about the morality of stage favorites, she flushed up quickly, and on my inquiring the cause, attributed it to the heat. And after all my unwitting cruelty she never spared herself once during those weary weeks in the sick-room. No, she could never care for me. It was all the kindness and pity in a good woman's heart that made her do it. Ah, well, I shall bless her and love her as long as I live, although the life she has given back to me is worthless without her.

Lately, since I have been convalescent, and able to sit on the veranda, she has seemed to avoid me. She is no doubt tired of me. She tells Mrs. Thomas to sit beside me and talk while she goes into the kitchen and does some of her work. While the stream of Mrs. Thomas' garrulous gossip wanders on, I strain my ears to catch the sound of her light feet on the bare boards, or try to get a glimpse of her white dress through the chink of the door.

Almost the first time I was able to sit up in bed, she brought a writing board and ink to me, saying, rather abruptly: "You will want to write to— to England." I wonder why she should think so? She left me alone, but I did not write to England. I wrote to her, telling how much I love her, but the letter has never been posted.

So bright, so joyous, so lovely! No, she could never care for me. It would be as the mating of a radiant bird of Paradise with a common garden sparrow. She is just trying—God bless her—to tell me not to mistake her kindness for love. Ah! Perdita, Perdita, if you but could!

I have not let her know that I have found out her disguise. I am waiting for her to tell me—I know she will never part without letting me know the

truth. She is only waiting her own time—and all my time is hers.

Good-by, my dear chum.

Yours, CREIGHTON.

---

Hollis' Farm,  
Cayuka Lake,

September 10th.

MY DEAR ADELE: I am so ridiculously happy that I do not know whether to laugh or cry. But if I cry I shall not be able to see to write, so perhaps I had better laugh. Still mad? Yes, madder than ever, and I never want to be sane again. Oh! my dear, I wish every one were as mad as I.

No! No! No! I am not coming back to New York. I am going to England on a lifelong engagement. The caste consists of Creighton and me, and the play is "Two in Paradise." There, it is out! I knew I could never mystify you for more than a second. Are you surprised? Even when I laughed at "My Englishman," I loved him. I loved him from the moment I saw him—so dear and so serious, on the porch surrounded by books—altho' I did not know it. Is it not wonderful that he should care for any one so frivolous and empty-headed?

I told him one day that I was going away—that he was well enough to do without a nurse. Then he began something about his debt of gratitude. I stopped him right short. "Mr. Acland, please don't thank me—why," I laughed, "it has been amusement to me. It is I who must apologize to you for practicing a deception upon you. I am not Perdita at all—I am a New York actress masquerading here in borrowed plumes! I wanted to tell you this before I go away to-morrow." I walked to the end of the veranda and turned my back upon him. I waited to hear what he would say. He did not say a word. I laughed just to pass the time. "Are you very surprised? Won't you compliment me on the excellence of my acting?" I half turned; and the dear



boy had actually walked up to my side—and he is so weak still! "Oh, you mustn't, you mustn't!" I cried. "Perdita," he said, slowly, "I am not surprised; I knew it. I was waiting for you to tell me." Then it must have been our eyes that spoke to one another, for I don't think our lips said a word. All I know is that the next minute I was sobbing in his arms, and the darling was trying to kiss the tears away. He has sternly forbidden me ever to shed another one, but I told him it deprived me of the happiness of having them kissed away, so I shall cry just a little, but not very sadly.

I never imagined any woman could be so happy as I am. Creighton has grown almost well in the last few days—he says it is the influence of love. Oh! I do hope I can make him happy. I do not deserve him in the least. I tell him that I am afraid there must still be some disguise or he could not love the real me. I shall not tell you what delightfully foolish things he says in answer. We are just a couple of very happy children. Are you *sure*, Adele, was I ever really on the stage? It must have been somebody just like me!

He does not mind my being an actress a bit. He says his people perhaps will be a little upset at first, but they

will be sure to like me when they know me. I don't know. He says, in case they *don't* like me, that he has a small private income just enough for two, if I don't mind being poor. I don't mind anything, so long as I have Creighton.

The girl in the photograph turns out to be only a friend, who is engaged to his great chum. Creighton says we shall be great friends. She looks very sweet and nice.

Adele, do you want a prescription for happiness? First find an Englishman, then marry him—only be sure he is the right sort. The nicest Englishman is mine, but you can have the second best.

I cannot write any more, for Creighton is calling at the foot of the stairs, and I would not lose one precious minute of his company. In all the world there are only Creighton and I—life has become one long duologue.

Good-by, my dear old friend.

Yours, STELLA.

Cablegram to Arthur Robson, Imperial Club, London, October 1:

"Perdita and I were married this morning. Sailing for London next Wednesday. CREIGHTON."



## A STRIKING EXAMPLE

**A**LTHOUGH your face and hands betray  
The ceaseless flight of time,  
They haven't a wrinkle more to-day  
Than they had in youth's glad prime.  
Your voice still holds those subtle charms  
The wild bird's note to mock,—  
So soft and sweet mid all alarms,—  
My pretty cuckoo clock.

NIXON WATERMAN.

# THE DAY OF THE DOG

By W. Bert Foster

WHEN he got aboard the train at the junction and stumbled into the parlor car he looked quite as awkward as he felt. But the day coaches were filled and there was no seat for him elsewhere.

It was perhaps impolite of the passengers to smile and glance at each other. But a more exact picture of a healthy young hayseed "*en tour*" would have been impossible to find.

And without doubt he knew that they were smiling at the figure he cut as he strode down the aisle in his heavy, square-toed boots, deposited his long valise in the rack overhead, which it completely filled, and dropped into the chair allotted him.

His face turned a beautiful brick red despite the tan on his cheeks. He "hunched" down into his seat as though to hide the awkward build of his garments, and got his long legs so tightly wedged between the chairs by crossing them that it looked as though he would have to call on the porter to help him out at the end of the journey.

Really, the only person in the car who did not smile, either covertly or openly, was the man next him. He was faultlessly attired in a fall suit, the proper thing in ties, very shiny shoes, and with his gloves and a top hat reposing in the rack over his head.

He, too, saw the evident distress of the young countryman, and he likewise read the name boldly stenciled upon the end of the huge valise—Hiram E. Jenks. But it was with perfect gravity and no little courtliness that the gentleman offered the newcomer one of his newspapers, behind the open pages of which Mr. Jenks at once buried his glowing face.

"The turnip crop must have been a success in Scowhegan this season," said one "smart Alec" to his neighbor in a very audible whisper, and two girls giggled, while even some of the staid passengers increased the width of their several smiles and glanced sidewise at the thick-soled boot which swung half across the aisle.

Only the man in the immaculate garments and with the straw-colored mustache and eyeglasses abstained from doing aught to hurt the countryman's feelings.

"The country along this line is very beautiful at this season of the year," he suggested.

"Yes," gulped the stranger. Then, evidently feeling that something further was expected of him when the gentleman had broken the ice, he added: "But I never was this way before."

"No? You are more familiar with the other branches of the system?"

"Some of them."

"Let's see; you got on at Baddington Junction? You had quite a wait there. I've been held up there myself. Rather a cheerless station."

"I should say!" exclaimed the countryman; but he suddenly caught sight of his big boots and withdrew into himself, and the boots out of the aisle, as he murmured:

"Waited two hours for this train."

"Ah, yes," remarked the gentleman, casually, and relapsed into silence. But behind his paper he consulted a section of the time-table which gave the arriving time of all trains from the branch roads at Baddington Junction.

At the next stop the gentleman left the car and, had the countryman been interested in his movements, he might

have seen him steer a course for the telegraph office. He got aboard the train again just as it started; but he did not address his fellow passenger again during the remainder of the journey to the Grand Central Station.

He scarcely paid attention, indeed, when the transfer agent came through the car and after giving the countryman a check and taking down a city address, departed with the big valise. Nor was he near Hiram E. Jenks when the latter sallied forth from the railway terminal and the soles of his big boots for the first time pressed the pavements of New York.

But a young fellow who had been having his shoes shined in a bootblack's chair on the sidewalk observed Jenks and ran after him. He, too, was a nicely-dressed man, and he had the most engaging smile in the world.

"Great Scott! is that you, Hi Jenks? How under the canopy did you get here?"

The countryman turned slowly and the blood arose in his cheeks again. His eyes snapped. For just a breath he looked as though his answer would be delivered physically and with force, instead of by word of mouth.

But the young fellow with the friendly smile was certainly not his idea of that strange and dangerous breed of city fauna known as a bunco steerer.

But he said at last, with a very stern visage:

"I do not know you. You have made a mistake, sir."

"Why, I can't be mistaken!" declared the other. "Maybe you don't remember me. It's been a good while since I saw you. Did you just come in from Great Neck?"

Mr. Jenks started perceptibly.

"I don't live at Great Neck," he began, and then bit off what else he might have had in mind to say. Evidently he was cautious.

"Well, that's where I saw you. It was at fair time—let's see, was it three or four years ago?"

Mr. Jenks' face began to brighten.

"Four years ago, I guess," he said. "But I don't remember you."

"Don't suppose you do. There was a good bunch of us fellows——"

"Mebbe you are a drummer? There's always a good many at Great Neck, fair week."

"You've hit it," said the other. "I was a traveling salesman then. And if you don't live at Great Neck I knew it couldn't be far away."

"At Hamblen."

"Five miles up the line," said the city man, nodding. "Well, that's not far out of the way. . . . But I'd never forget you, Jenks."

"No? I suppose I don't look much like city folks—yet," admitted the newcomer.

"Oh, you'll go back looking like a Broadway dude, I suppose?" and the other laughed. "Cut all the other fellows out—and all that? Well, I'm heartily glad to see you. If you're in town for long, hope you'll look me up. I'm in something rather better than selling drugs and soap now."

The young man passed Jenks a card and turned as though to cross the street. Jenks glanced swiftly at the pasteboard and read:

GEORGE L. PERKINS

REPRESENTING THE  
CASE-KELLOGG MOTOR CAR CO., LTD.

He glanced again at the friendly Mr. Perkins, and there was surprise in his eyes. Also he seemed rather sorry to have the young man leave him so abruptly.

"I—I say," he called after Perkins. "I don't know as I'll look you up and trouble you any that way," Jenks said, as the city man turned back; "but tell me where's a good place to eat, will you?"

"Well, now!" exclaimed Perkins. "I had it in my mind to invite you to go to dinner—supper, I s'pose you call it—

with me. But didn't know how you'd take it. You know—country visitor and affable stranger, and all that!" and Perkins laughed.

"But if you'll go——"

"I got to eat," said Jenks. "And I reckon I ought to remember you. Sorry I can't just place you."

"You say the word and we'll go across the street. You can't beat that hotel in New York. You can get a square meal there."

"Here goes!" said Jenks, and they crossed the street and went into the big café.

The countryman's face was red again and he got into a corner seat very awkwardly. When the waiter came to arrange the table he certainly stared at Jenks, and the latter grew redder than ever under the fellow's scrutiny.

But Perkins seemed to notice nothing. He was affable, chatty, and his manner put Jenks at his ease before the meal was through.

They grew quite sociable, despite the evident cautiousness of the man from out of town. He admitted before the black coffee came that he had come to town for something beside a visit to the tailors and a peek in at some of the resorts the fame of which had reached Great Neck and the surrounding territory.

"I've got a little to invest in something good," Jenks said, cautiously. "Something better than five per cent. mortgages."

"Now, you can't inveigle *me* into talking business outside of business hours," laughed Perkins. "But after nine-thirty to-morrow morning I'll talk Case-Kellogg Motor Cars to you till you're black in the face. Kellogg—he's the president—talks our new motive power all the time. Talks it in his sleep, I believe!"

He threw his head back with a laugh which was cut off with a gasp of surprise.

"Talking of angels!" he exclaimed. "There's Mr. Kellogg now. I didn't know he was in town."

Jenks looked around. A gentleman was coming slowly through the café.

He wore a tall hat, was dressed up to the nines, and he had a wisp of yellow mustache.

He would have gone right by the table where the two new friends sat without seeing them, had not Perkins leaned forward and caught his sleeve.

"Mr. Kellogg!"

"Ah-ha! Perkins, I'm glad to see you. Didn't expect to have that pleasure until to-morrow. How's business?"

"Now you know you can't get anything of that kind out of me to-night," laughed Perkins. "Only I *will* say that things are booming. Besides, I've a friend with me."

"Beg pardon!" said Mr. Kellogg, turning suddenly and seeing Mr. Jenks.

"Let me introduce you. Mr. Jenks, Mr. Kellogg."

The latter looked slightly puzzled.

"I—I—it seems to me that I have seen Mr. Jenks before. But I can't for the life of me tell where."

"I came down on the train with you, sir," blurted out Jenks, very red again.

"Ah! I remember." Mr. Kellogg shook hands. "Is Mr. Jenks one of our stockholders, Perkins?"

"Not yet. But I'm going to try and encourage him to be one after nine-thirty to-morrow morning. You know I won't talk business out of business hours, Kellogg."

"I know," sighed Kellogg. "And I believe that there are twenty-four business hours in a day. I don't want to cut you out on your commissions, Mr. Perkins, but I'd like to show Mr. Jenks our auto, if you have finished your dinner. Mine is waiting for me outside."

Perkins shrugged his shoulders.

"It's up to Mr. Jenks. I won't even show goods out of hours."

"I'd like to see your wagon," said Jenks. "I've seen a lot up my way. They're something of a nuisance; but they say there's more money in them than there used to be in bicycles."

"I—guess—there—is!" said Perkins, paying the waiter before Jenks could lug his fat wallet out of his pocket. "That's all right, Mr. Jenks. You're my guest to-night."

"Well, that's kind of you," declared the countryman.

They went out on the sidewalk. A very handsome automobile stood beside the curb.

"You see," said Mr. Kellogg, eagerly, "our motive power is generated by something different from either gasoline or electricity, and we can drive our machines—any machine, in fact, that has our attachment—faster than either the electric vehicles or the gasoline wagons."

"Now, now!" exclaimed Perkins, good-naturedly.

"Well, you'll want to take Mr. Jenks for a spin to prove our statements," said the enthusiastic president. "Why not this evening? It's plenty light enough yet for a round of the park—or a trip out the drive."

"What do you say, Mr. Jenks?" asked Perkins.

"I—I think I'd like to see how it is worked," admitted the countryman.

No sooner said than done. Kellogg dismissed the *chauffeur*. The three men entered the vehicle and started uptown.

"What do you think of it?" asked Kellogg, bringing the machine to a stop. "Ain't it a wonder? Why, we've got them all beat to a standstill!"

Jenks was growing enthusiastic.

"It looks good," he admitted. "You're selling stock in your company?"

"A certain amount of it—yes. We've got to have capital for our plant, you know. It will be a winner."

"Those wagons certainly do beat all!" exclaimed Jenks. "I tried a fellow's that came up my way last summer. Do you mind if I try this one?"

"Not at all!" replied Kellogg. He winked at Perkins. Both stepped out of the machine.

"He's so easy I'm ashamed to take the money," whispered Perkins to the "president," hoarsely.

The motor car started. It moved faster. Mr. Jenks seemed to have no trouble at all with the mechanism. In fact, he sped the machine up the boulevard until it was out of the sight of the two smiling men standing beside the track.

In a certain very smart office near Wall Street a tall, athletic young man of very ruddy complexion sat at a desk. To him entered a friend, likewise of the well-to-do broker class.

"Hello, Frankie!" exclaimed the newcomer. "Heard you were back. Great sport?"

"Good shooting," said the tall fellow. "But I lost my grip and a suit of clothes at that confounded backwoods hotel. Had to come home in togs borrowed from the guide—and brought my shooting suit home in that," and he kicked a big valise out from under his desk. On its end was stenciled "Hiram E. Jenks."

"Ha, ha!" cried his friend. "You must have looked a guy carrying that thing out of the station."

"Didn't. I gave it to the express man. But I looked a guy all right. You should have seen the eyes of the waiter in the hotel café 'bug out' when I landed there for dinner. I certainly looked the hayseed to the life. By the way, going up home now?"

"Yes."

"I'll take you along in my auto."

"What! got a whiz cart? You must certainly have struck luck."

"I did. Come aboard and I'll tell you about it. Never cost me a cent, and I reckon that it will be a long day before the former owners show up for it."

As the young men went out of the building and climbed into the automobile, a man in a tall hat and with his lip shaded by a straw-colored mustache, and another dressed in a plain business suit, had just stopped, big eyed, on the pavement to stare at the broker's machine. Then the younger man glanced at the athlete's face.

"Hully gee!" he muttered. "That's him, Butch!"

A man who had stood near came quickly behind them and tapped him of the tall hat on the shoulder.

"Butch," he said, "you're too far downtown—you and your friend. You know well enough where the line is. Git!"

"All right, officer," said the one ad-

dressed as Butch, erstwhile the president of the Case-Kellogg Motor Car Company, Ltd. "We'll mosey right along. But tell us who that big fellow who got into the wagon was?"

"Well, he ain't in your class, nor he ain't a 'come-on,'" said the plain clothes man, good-naturedly. "It's Frank Bobbett, one of the shrewdest brokers on the street, they say. He isn't your game."

"No, I reckon he ain't," muttered

Butch to his companion, as they walked north.

"Humph! We're the 'come-ons,'" agreed the other.

"And that auto cost us a clean five hundred."

"And that dinner piled on top of it! Gee, Butch! They say every dog has his day. The 'come-on' certainly had *his* day that time!"

And the procession moved sorrowfully northward.



## HUSH

WHAT'S the best thing that you ever have done?

The whitest day,  
The cleverest play  
That ever you set in the shine of the sun?  
The time that you felt just a wee bit proud  
Of defying the cry of the cowardly crowd  
And stood back to back with God?  
Aye, I notice you nod,  
But silence yourself, lest you bring me shame  
That I have no answering deed to name.

What's the worst thing that ever you did?

The darkest spot,  
The blackest blot  
On the page you have pasted together and hid?  
Ah, sometimes you think you've forgotten it quite,  
Till it crawls in your bed in the dead of the night  
And brands you its own with a blush.  
What was it? Nay, hush!  
Don't tell it to me, for fear it be known  
That I have an answering blush of my own.

But whenever you notice a clean hit made,  
Sing high and clear  
The sounding cheer  
You would gladly have heard for the play you played.  
And when a man walks in the way forbidden,  
Think you of the thing you have happily hidden  
And spare him the sting of your tongue.  
Do I do that which I've sung?  
Well, it may be I don't and it may be I do,  
But I'm telling the thing which is good for *you*!

EDMUND VANCE COOKE.



# THE PASSING OF LON TWITCHELL

By Chauncey C. Hotchkiss

MR. ALONZO TWITCHELL walked over the rickety piazza of the barber shop, stepped into the room, laid his great form on the well-worn operating chair, and, drawing his knotty hand over his patriarchal face, remarked that he "guessed" he would have a shave. Had he been a millionaire he could not have done it with more of an air nor with greater nonchalance.

The Sunday morning sun glanced warmly across the floor; a few early flies buzzed over the recently-washed window, and the deep hush of the Sabbath was only broken by the melody of the bell on the church next door, the shuffling of feet as the worshipers passed over the flagging that bounded the green, and the gay call of birds that seemed to emphasize the holy quiet of the day.

Lon Twitchell was not devout, nor was he refined, and as he turned his broad cheek to the lathering brush he glanced across the fresh May grass of the green, over which swept the swaying shadows of the maples, and opined that "it was a damned fine day an' good growin' weather."

It was all of that. The air was like a gracious bath as it drifted through the half-clothed branches. The genial sun, with a hint of summer fervency, shone from the clearest of blue skies over which lazily floated a few rags of white vapor. The distant hills were veiled in a violet haze, and the nearby meadows stretched away in billows of golden green that showed the succulence of freshness, and gave to the land the note of late spring.

If ever a case concealed the nature of its contents, the outward appearance of

Mr. Twitchell concealed the nature of his character. His figure was immense, his face benign; but no schoolboy could have been more rudimental in intellect, while a sage would have been less satisfied of his own infallibility. Undoubtedly Mr. Twitchell would have been the butt of the village had not his magnificent physique and his extensive and unique vocabulary of profanity protected him from that form of rustic insult; but if he was not the town butt he was its "character." Blind to his own moral and social weakness, he was fully aware of the fact that without exception his was the finest countenance in all Chenango County, despite his sixty years and his shabby clothing. Dressed in proper regimentals, he could have posed as the "Father of his Country," for his large, bland features were colonial in type and appeared to beam with intelligent benevolence. The mold is broken, nowadays. Gowned and placed in a pulpit, he would have impressed a congregation until he opened his mouth to speak—and then he might have impressed them more, but in a different way. Drunk or sober, he was grandiloquent. Upon an empty stomach and without the wherewithal to fill it, he would be the center of a group on the piazza of Gartle's store and hold forth as a critic and expounder on any question of the day, coming out especially strong in offering points to men like the Vanderbilts and Astors as to the proper way of living, making money in general and taking care of it in particular; his ragged, cotton coat meanwhile fluttering in the wind, and his rich, sonorous voice making the ground tremble like the diapason of a grand organ. If ever a man took himself seriously and was re-

warded by his own vanity, Mr. Twitchell was that man.

The operation of shaving having been completed, Lon arose from his seat, shook himself, combed his long, white hair with his thick fingers, and feeling through the pockets of his ragged vest, snapped down his last ten-cent piece on the glass top of the cigar case, looking wistfully at the contents, and dragged a chair out into the sun.

The barber picked up the coin, turned it once or twice with an introspective air and stepped to the door.

"Had yer breakfast yet, Lon?"

"No, I hain't. I always likes a shave before eatin'—makes a man feel better," returned that gentleman, stretching out his worn rubber boots and keeping his eye on the distant landscape, while his clean jaw worked slowly.

The barber looked down at the coin in his hand.

"Say, Lon; we won't count this, ye know. You don't owe me nothin'. I'll bet ye hain't had nothin' to eat, 'cause there's nothin' the house. Come now!"

Mr. Twitchell opened his mouth and smiled, thereby spoiling his countenance by showing a row of broken fangs blackened by tobacco.

"Wall, I ain't sayin' ye ain't right fer once. A real man—a honest man ain't never appreciated these days; not until after he's robbed a lot o' people an' growd rich. In fact, I don't mind tellin' you, I be a little short to-day." He shrugged his shoulders as though it was a singular misfortune and one for which he was willing to offer a delicate apology.

"What I want to know is——"

But what he wished to know was not immediately apparent, for he was interrupted by a thick-set man, a middle-aged man dressed palpably in his Sunday clothes, who sauntered up and dropped on the step of the roofless piazza with a lazy slouch to his broad shoulders and a smile on his face.

"Hello, Lon!"

"Hello, Ray!"

"Anythin' new?"

"Not's I know on."

"Thought you was goin' to work for Foster yisterday," drawled the newcomer, taking out a knife and splitting a sliver of wood from the step.

Mr. Twitchell straightened himself and exploded with an expletive that jarred on the quiet air.

"That's what I was just sayin'! I'd like to know when a man is goin' to get his rights in this country! Foster's like everybody else. Thinks because a man's down he can be rid over! Ain't I as much of a man as Foster? Does he think he's goin' to insult me an' me stan' it? 'Huh! He offered me a dollar'n a quarter for the work—a dollar'n a quarter a day. A dollar'n a half is my price. I ain't his slave, by a d—n sight. I'm a man as much as he is. I'm a American citizen. I'm wurth a dollar'n a half or I ain't wurth nothin'. Thought I'd just have to knuckle to him—he did. Found his mistake. Dollar'n a quarter—not much; not if Lon Twitchell knows himself! Huh!"

He brought his great hand down on the much-whittled arm of his chair, expectorated copiously, and leaned back with an air of injured dignity.

"What did you do yesterday?" asked the barber, suddenly pocketing the coin he had been balancing on his finger. "Look around for anything?"

"No, I didn't. I was too mad. I tell you, gentlemen, I just made up my mind that Foster 'ud have to whistle. Heard there was goin' to be a hoss killin' over to Ives Settlement, so just thought I'd go over an' see it done."

"Four miles over an' four back; that makes eight," murmured Ray. "After a job?" he asked.

"What! Over there? Not much."

"Git any dinner?"

"No."

"Well, I'm darned! You're a hustler, that's a fact!"

"But I let Foster know that no man can lord it over me," returned Mr. Twitchell, looking around impressively.

"Say, Lon, I think Foster only offered the job to you because you wa'n't doin' anything. Sam did it by noon for seventy-five cents; it would ha' taken you all day."

"What do I care! I didn't do it, did I? No, sir; not by a jug full!"

Mr. Twitchell's rich voice floated across the green, harmonious and thoroughly in keeping with his air of satisfaction at having conquered an opponent; not knowing, nor caring, if he did, that Foster had, the day before, sent to Mr. Twitchell's wife food from his own table—and that, too, in sheer pity of her condition. There was silence for a few moments. The bells had ceased. Peace reigned. A little cloud of dust drifted along the village street, following in the wake of a rattling buggy whose belated owner was hurrying to the Methodist church down by the hotel. The loose gearing of the vehicle was almost musical, as the sound was mellowed by distance.

"Say, Lon," said Ray, digging into the soft wood of the weather-worn step with the point of his knife, "I just come from your house. Wanted to speak to ye."

"What about?"

"I dunno as I'd better say, but if it won't hurt your sensibilities too much I'll offer ye a job where I'm workin' up to the lake." He held his knife aloft and looked up. Mr. Twitchell cleared his voice.

"At that doctor's place what come from New York? Be you workin' there?"

"Yes."

"'Nother bloated 'ristocrat! Comes up here an' swells around!"

"Don't he mind his bisniss to suit ye?" asked Ray.

"Oh, he's all right's far as I know. But he wouldn't work for me—just 'cause I happen to be down. What's the job?"

"Diggin' post holes for a fence around his place. It's got to be done right along."

"How much?"

"Well, Lon, seein' it's you, I guess he'll be willin' to give a dollar'n a half a day for your vallable services. I can dig about ten holes to your four, but you can jaw the universe into shape while you're a hollerin' on 'em out, so

I guess it's wuth it. I want help, anyway. What do ye say?"

"Wall, now that's what I call pretty white—reasonable white," said Mr. Twitchell, clearing the edge of the piazza with another stream of black saliva. "There's a man what has a just appreciation of sarvice. I don't know the doctor an' he don't have my acquaintance 'cept by sight. That's white of him. He knows a man. Ray, ye may tell him that I'll accommodate. It ought ter be two dollars—but I'll accommodate. He means well; he's a gentleman. How long will the job be?"

"'Bout a week," said Ray, getting to his feet preparatory to lounging off.

"That's fair. A hull week; that would be—lemme see—that would be —" Mr. Twitchell looked serious.

"Nine dollars," Ray volunteered.

"So 'twould; nine dollars exactly—that's a go." And Mr. Twitchell looked as wise as though he had figured it out himself. Then, bending low to meet the ear of his friend, he said, in a strident whisper:

"Ye haven't so much as a quarter about ye, Ray, now have ye? If so, I'll just take ye down to the hotel an' we'll celebrate the contract."

"Guess I don't care to likker to-day," said Ray, not unkindly, though he cut like a whip as he concluded: "I ought to tell the doctor to give the money to your wife."

The old man fired at once. This insult to his dignity was more than flesh and blood could bear, and Ray went off laughing at his shot, followed by a flood of profanity.

It was the Saturday afternoon following, and the post holes had been dug—all but the last one, and Mr. Twitchell was taking out the final shovelful of dirt. It had been no easy business for the old man, as the hardpan was like set mortar and constantly required "pecking," as he said, and his years and habits had sapped him of the vigor of his lustier days. As he scooped out the final lift he stopped and wiped his brow with a dirty, red cotton

handkerchief and marked with great satisfaction the doctor, who descended the steps of his new house and approached him.

The doctor had enjoyed the week. He had enjoyed the beautiful lake that sparkled in front of his house; enjoyed the lovely sweep of vision and the sense of rest from his exacting profession, but almost as much as anything he had enjoyed watching and listening to the man who looked like George Washington and talked like an anarchist; who argued on politics and religion from an original standpoint and settled the social status of every person of prominence in the community by comparing them to himself; a process in which they suffered considerably, although it was made without venom.

Mr. Twitchell was glad the week was over. He had felt a creeping weakness at intervals, for some time before; a quick dizziness and shortness of breath, which, however, had passed and been forgotten or drowned in whiskey when some one treated. He dropped his shovel and straightened himself as the doctor approached.

"Well, the job's done, an' I ain't sorry. Ain't so young as I was! Guess I'll be wanderin' along arter Ray! he's went."

He still hesitated, however, and looked at his employer, while the doctor read the interrogation in his eye.

"I regret, Lon, that I don't happen to have the cash about me——" He stopped and drew a folded paper from his pocket, while Mr. Twitchell's face fell; "but if you don't mind," he continued, "I will give you this; it is a check for nine dollars which I have drawn to your order; you can get it cashed in the village, I think. I hope you don't consider that I have taken a liberty."

The doctor's tone was apologetic as he held out the slip of paper. The old man's face was a study. It might have been the pink from the setting sun or it might have been an unusual flush that shone through his bronzed features. Plainly he was embarrassed, and took the slip in his dirt-stained fingers, turn-

ing it over and over; for, in truth, Mr. Twitchell had heard of checks and had a ghostly idea of their power, but he had never before seen one. Ready cash was the recognized medium of exchange in Guilford.

"Any—anythin' you say, Doc, goes! If you say so, it goes! You're a gentleman; I always said you was a gentleman." He rubbed his grimy hand over his hip and held it out abruptly, a new light in his blue eye. "Doc, you're the damndest whitest man in this town! You know how to 'preciate a feller citizen; but I wa'n't a-lookin' for this, though—I wa'n't. I guess I'll go home."

When he got halfway around the lake he stopped behind the ruined ice house and, pulling forth the check, conned it carefully. It was on a New York bank, and the clear, round scrip of the lithographed lettering was more wonderful than any picture the old man had ever seen; even the canceled stamp gave it additional dignity. He spelled the words out, letter by letter, in growing astonishment, then slowly folded the paper and tucked it carefully in the pocket of his soiled cotton shirt.

"My name's onto it," he murmured. "He put my whole name onto it; 'Lonzo Twitchell! By the jumpin' jimminetty!'" Then he picked up the vest that had fallen from his arm and marched on, mighty with importance.

For two days Mr. Twitchell lived on the sight of that check, gloating openly. He showed it to the wife of his bosom, who did not understand it at all, and who was skeptical about it, as not being cash. But he—he was more than satisfied, and deprecated his spouse as being only a woman, who knew nothing of high business transactions. He passed half his time in looking at it; placed it carefully under his flock pillow at night and ate his limited rations of potatoes and bacon with the paper open before him propped up against a broken teacup. It was rare, indeed, for Mr. Twitchell to have nine dollars at once. Nine dollars in cash was just so much and no more—while a check—that was vast. The amount did not impress him; it

meant so much food and drink—principally drink, but the method made him a man of mark.

Having enjoyed this sweet morsel alone for two whole days, Mr. Twitchell could stand hiding his light no longer. He waited until Gartle's store had gathered its usual quota of loungers, and then, like an independent man of the world, he strolled over to it on Monday evening. He had for a long time owed Judge Gartle seven dollars for goods parted with on trust, but the sharp though kind-hearted proprietor had charged up the amount to profit and loss without more than a delicate hint to his shiftless customer that the account could not be extended. The judge was also irritated at the childlike prodigality of his debtor, who would make ducks and drakes of his small earnings and let his own home suffer. That quality of pride which would have barred the store to most men under these circumstances was no deterrent to Mr. Twitchell. As a place of resort it divided its popularity with the hotel bar, and he was sure of an audience, especially as it was raining.

Mr. Twitchell sauntered in and placed his back to the stove, in which a few sticks were burning, for the night was chilly, spread his legs, looked important and bided his time. There was nothing in the rustic conversation that aroused him, as he did not feel very well, nothing until some one mentioned the city doctor and his probable wealth and standing; for wealth in a man from New York was a foregone conclusion in this little hamlet so far from the metropolis. How could any one, not favored with a great deal of money, afford to spend three months in the country "a doin' nothin' but loafin'?"

Mr. Twitchell here opined that "the doctor was the whitest man in them parts—the whitest man he ever seen." Justice of the Peace Gartle, who stood behind the showcase, averred that he had become fairly well acquainted with that gentleman and admitted that he was a generous man—a fine man.

Mr. Twitchell took a fresh bite from his plug and indorsed strongly, adding that the doctor was "the best judge of

human nater—could size up a man quicker'n anybody he ever see—an' was white clean through," then he strolled over to the counter.

There was a tempting array of pocket knives, leather gloves, soap, perfumery, wallets and the *et cetera* of small goods of a general store displayed under the glass of the case, and he glanced over the collection.

"That there pocketbook sort o' takes my eye, jedge," said the old man, pointing to a small one. "Less look at it."

The judge rolled his cigar over his toothless gums and laughed.

"What in thunder do ye want of a pocketbook, Lon?" he drawled, without moving.

"What d'ye suppose I want of it?" snapped his scandalized customer. "D'ye think I'm a waitin' to eat it?"

Gartle tossed it out.

"Ye darn fool, ye hain't got nothin' to put into it!" he exclaimed, with a laugh in which the crowd joined.

"Hain't, hay! How much is't?"

"Twenty-five cents."

"Huh! That's all right; would ye mind writin' it up for a while?"

"Why, ye blasted idjut!" exclaimed the judge; "what do ye want to be trusted for when ye hain't got nothin' to put into it. Don't ye know what I said?"

This was Mr. Twitchell's time. He swelled slightly, drew out the check, tossed it down on the counter, and, stepping off, struck an attitude.

"Guess that's good, ain't it? Ain't that good?"

Gartle glanced at the paper.

"Doctor paid ye in a check, hay! Why, yes, that's good enough."

"Guess that's good; don't ye? Ain't that my name onto it? Would my name be onto it if the doctor thought ole Lon Twitchell was a beat? He's a capitalist—he is! There's a man who knows a man. He knowed I wa'n't no beat! That's my name on it; ain't it? Ain't that my name? Ain't that good?"

He jammed his hands into the bottoms of his pockets and looked around in triumph.

"Thought ole Lon didn't amount to nothin', didn't ye?" he continued. "Thought he couldn't buy a goll-darn little pocketbook 'thout shufflin' over it. That's a generine check—that is—ain't it? It's drawn on a bank to New York, an' ain't that my real name—'Lonzo Twitchell? Ain't that me?"

The old man had played his trump card, and that moment probably marked the high-water point in his life.

The judge picked up the check and turned it over. That gentleman saw his opportunity. Mr. Twitchell was strutting up and down the floor enjoying his triumph and expectorating freely.

"There ain't a doubt about it, Lon," returned the proprietor. "Ye can have the pocketbook. I suppose ye want to settle that little account. I don't mind cashin' the doctor's check."

The old man appeared inattentive to the hint; it is doubtful if he heard it, so engrossed was he in his victory.

"Don't mind cashin'! That's just as good as them government bonds!" returned Mr. Twitchell, who had but a hazy idea of what a bond was like. "I'd jest as soon have it! I know the doctor; he's a *friend* o' mine! Ain't that his name, an' hain't he put on his name with mine? I just guess it's good! Huh!"

He lounged from the center of the room where he had stopped to declaim, and, going to the counter, picked up the little wallet, slipped it into his pocket and was about to reach for the check, but the storekeeper was before him; the judge held the paper.

"The check is all right, Lon," he said, softly; "so is the doctor an' so are you. But this is no good until ye indorse it."

"Indorse! What's that?"

"You've got to put your name on the back."

"Oh! Guess ye be openin' on yer eyes to the fact that ole Lon ain't no beat; ain't you? Want my name, hay? My name's wuth somethin'—ain't it?"

His importance made him giddy. Applause was never so sweet to a king as to Mr. Twitchell was this exposition of his consequence, and the sight of the

judge holding out a pen to him in order that he might sign his name on a financial document—and that, too, before a cloud of witnesses.

The old man took the penholder, which almost disappeared in his great, hard hand. He coughed slightly and expectorated lavishly.

"Hain't had no call to write for so long that it's sort o' hard to—to—make the writin' graceful as it ought ter be. Ye see, when a feller ain't in the habit it goes hard. I ain't no writer nowa-days; I'm a tiller o' the soil—I am. What'll I put?"

He was well-nigh blushing, and his jaw worked convulsively on his cud.

The judge came delicately to his rescue. "Oh, jest put a cross there, Lon. It shows ye put your hand to it; I'll see to the rest."

Mr. Twitchell shuffled his feet, squared himself and laboriously traced a palsied cross, on the completion of which the judge swept the paper into his cash drawer and tossed out two silver dollars. The check was gone.

"Wot's them for?" asked the old man, looking astonished.

"Why, I supposed ye wanted to pay what ye owed, Lon; didn't ye? Didn't ye say so? Ain't it proper of ye? No man wants to keep a bill runnin' forever. Ye owed me seven dollars; there's the change."

It was an unexpected flank movement against which the debtor had no defense. He could not repudiate the obligation, but the spirit of vanity which had nerved the capitalist up to that moment broke with a snap. He seemed to shrink to half his height as he looked down on the shining coins he mechanically picked from the counter. He said something to himself—something that sounded like a feeble expletive, but despair covered him like a garment.

There was no lack of the pathetic in the fine, old face as his glance went slowly from the silver to the proprietor and back again. His disappointment was keen. He slowly weighed the shining pieces in his hand for a moment, then dropped them with an air of abstraction into his new purse.



But he would not retreat before the crowd. There were a few expressive winks among the assemblage as the outwitted financier walked slowly back to the stove, and for a few moments utter silence prevailed. Those who knew Mr. Twitchell best knew that something would be said. Presently that gentleman raised his drooping head and cleared his voice.

"Jedge," said he, "my old man an' yours was boys together."

"I know it, Lon," was the soothing reply.

Mr. Twitchell rubbed his strong chin and gathered force.

"Did your dad ever tell about goin' huntin' with mine once?"

"Don't know as he did."

"Bet he didn't."

"Guess he didn't. Why?"

"Reason's plain. Them two went together across the lake after deer one day. The deer uster run up where the doctor's house is standin'; the woods wa'n't cleared then—'twas about sixty years ago." The speaker looked reminiscent, spat and continued, the floor trembling from the resonance of his powerful voice. The crowd listened.

"They went across in an ole dugout, an' when they got most over, my ole man accerdently dropped his powder-horn over the side into about ten feet o' water. It was a nice powderhorn, an' plumb full o' powder, while your dad—both was boys then—he hadn't hardly any. He wouldn't let my ole man have a d—n grain o' his'n, but he offered to go down after the horn right along for five cents. My old man couldn't swim a stroke, so he had to give up the five cents and over inter the lake went your dad."

The speaker paused again and leisurely crunched his quid. The crowd hung in suspense.

"Well, did he get the horn?" asked the judge.

"Evidently he did," returned Mr. Twitchell, with a spark growing in his light eye, "but he was so long about doin' on it an' stayed down so long that my paw got worried an' looked over the side."

The speaker stopped again, knowing the value of a climax.

"What did he see?" asked the incautious judge, his face a broad smile.

"What did he see!" returned the outraged story-teller, raising his voice until it thundered. "He seed your old man settin' on the bottom a-pourin' powder from my ole man's horn into his'n, an' I'll be gosh darned if you ain't a chip o' the ole block."

The roar that followed shook the timbers of the building. The judge laughed, stamped and swore, but before he could calm down and offer the cigars, Mr. Twitchell, with a smile of grim satisfaction on his benign countenance, had withdrawn, shutting the door behind him with considerable force.

But once outside the smile faded; the necessity for acting was over.

Instead of giving a thought to the present state of his finances and his empty larder, he turned to the spirit of recklessness that took possession of him. Neither he nor his wife would starve; the neighbors would attend to that; they had before, dozens of times. He would show people that "old Lon wasn't to be put down so easy;" a drink would brace him up.

He was conscious that his legs dragged with unwonted heaviness as he walked slowly along the uneven pavement of the dark street, his steps mechanically directed toward the hotel. He was conscious, too, of a sudden chill and an unusual weakness in his stomach as he entered the warm precincts of the bright office with the brighter bar beyond.

Here was another gathering of his well-known fellows, all sitting around in the listless attitude of men who are too well acquainted to be interesting to each other. He acknowledged the undemonstrative welcome of "hello!" or "evenin', Lon" with which one or two greeted him, and then he stunned the assemblage by inviting all hands, from the proprietor down, to adjourn to the bar and have a drink. The crowd was electrified. Lon Twitchell had never done such a thing before in his life. Not that

he had a mean hair in his white head, but his finances or prudence had never allowed him to be generous on such a gigantic scale as this; he was generally the recipient, never the donor.

The American farmer, the quiet, hard-fisted countryman, the backbone of the nation, is rarely demonstrative or in a hurry, after "chores." The crowd arose wonderingly and slowly, but none the less surely they drank, brightening as they absorbed their liquor. Mr. Twitchell was a trifle staggered as he saw the size of the score. It was just one dollar, but he paid it with an off-hand air and a crushed heart. He took two more drinks at some one's expense and then ambled out into the night. The alcohol had not braced him as it should have done; he was not feeling very well. At that moment his mental state might have been represented by a rocket stick that had soared aloft in glory and was now falling. Making allowance for their different capabilities, Mr. Twitchell had been as hardly hit as was Napoleon at Waterloo, and like the unfortunate emperor he kept his agony under lock and key, showing an undisturbed exterior.

The rain had ceased, the clouds had dissipated, and the lately risen moon peeped through the roof of the black arch of trees that spanned the street of the lovely village, and the old man crawled along until he came abreast of the green and opposite the little forgotten house he called his home.

Just at this spot there is an old ruin, a relic of a fire of years before when the stage tavern burned down. The ragged, uncleared and unenclosed cellar of the burned building makes a pit by the roadside, its bottom filled with stones from the caved foundation, and the whole was overgrown with brambles, weeds and the wealth of running vine with which nature attempts to conceal devastation and the handiwork of man.

Here Mr. Twitchell heard a childish cry—a cry full of pain and tears. A little investigation and the light of the moon discovered a child, a girl of about ten years, who had tripped in the dark

and fallen into the shallow hole. Though terribly frightened, she was not injured beyond having a few bruises, and an empty tin pail and some two dozen eggs in a vast mess of broken shell and flowing yolk explained the extent of the catastrophe.

The old man scrambled into the opening and picked up the unfortunate. Here was distress in a form different from his own, and here the heart of a child met the heart of a child, as, God wot, the heart of man rarely meets its fellow.

Lon Twitchell swore a great oath, which, by the way, was not heard in heaven, and bore the sobbing mite to the ground above, set her on her feet, felt for broken bones, pronounced her a "bully gal," and begged her not to cry, because it hurt him so; then he fell to scraping the mass of albumen and yellow filth from her scanty calico frock. The girl trusted him and clung to him as not a man in the village would have done, getting out her tale between her sobs and discovering her fear of punishment for her loss of the eggs. The old man, shivering again and with a strange pain in his head, comforted her kindly, but without regard to the rules of grammar or the flowers of rhetoric; then he took her in his arms and carried her to her home. When he got before her gate he set her down with a jocose remark that made the child laugh between the catches of her little breath, and here the utter worthlessness of the man came again to the surface. As he put the pail into the chubby hands and kissed the little one good-night, he dropped his last dollar on the bottom of the shining tin.

"Now ye have somethin' to rattle in it a d—n sight better'n eggs, sissy! Run along, little gal. Ye might say 'twas ole Lon Twitchell."

The falling stick was making a shining trail. It was the apotheosis of the town "character."

The curiosity of the child overcame her fear, and she picked the coin from the pail, saw its value, and, shrieking with delight, started for her door, but stopped on the way and came run-

ning back. She went up to Mr. Twitchell, and without a word held up her small face to be kissed. Words were unnecessary between them. The old man folded her to his heart with a feeling he had never known before, kissing her again and again, and when he placed her on her feet she ran off with an ecstasy that was apparent in her quick breathing and shining eyes.

The man looked wistfully after her, then turned homeward, staggered a bit and swore at his own awkwardness. When he came to the green he started to cross it, but in its center he stopped, looked around wonderingly as though the place was strange, grew dizzy, reeled and fell unconscious.

Ray found him late that night while on his way home. Great as was the burden, the younger man lifted him and carried him tenderly to his house, never for an instant dreaming that the old man was drunk; no one had ever been able to floor Mr. Twitchell. He knew something was wrong with his friend, his old friend whom he had joked and loved and badgered all his life. He went for Dr. Marvin at once, late as it was, and "Doc. Marve," who held the family secrets of the town in his broad breast and who had helped to bring into the world nine-tenths of its population, stated that old Lon had had a uremic convulsion and that his time had come.

But the old man did not know it. He awoke from his fit and swore at his sudden plight; swore as he always swore—a blustering hornet without a sting. He fretted and he laughed, cursing his helplessness and making a joke of it in the same breath, but growing weaker and weaker, and in his wandering moments, talking and moaning about a check with his name "onto" it. Ray worked at his business all day and stayed with him all night, nursing the helpless giant between his own naps, which he took in a chair, with the tenderness of a woman. Mrs. Twitchell was too old and was useless in the sick-room.

The story of the check got out; so did the story of the great treat and the dollar in the pail. Help poured in. Judge Gartle went over and looked down at

the tossing, muttering man whose fertile brain had traduced the reputation of his father. He nursed at times during the day and by night had laid his finger on the mental trouble. When Ray came in that evening Mr. Twitchell was sleeping and the judge tiptoed away. He came back very soon and Lon was still asleep. The judge softly unclosed the great, lax hand of the unconscious man, and, placing a piece of paper in it, softly closed it again. Ray looked on and winked hard; the judge laid his finger on his lips and stole out.

It was midnight when the patient awoke. The first thing he saw was the check he grasped and a holy joy lighted his now waxen face.

"Ray! Lift me up! I was a-dreamin' I had it—an' by G—d! here it is! I got it—hain't I? Lift me up an' let me look at it. That's my name on it; ain't it? Ha! He knowed I wa'n't no beat!"

Ray lifted him and held the candle. The light threw out the letters strongly.

"'Lonzo Twitchell! But that's good; ain't it? I can give another dollar to the little gal. I guess yes!"

He stopped and seemed to dream, saying something softly to himself, his white head swaying from weakness. Ray watched him closely, coughing away a lump in his own throat, and then stooping, marked the fallen lip and the glassiness of the eyes fixed on the check.

"Come, Lon."

There was no answer.

"Come, Lon. Don't ye know me, Lon?"

The old man slowly turned his head to his friend and smiled feebly.

"Know ye, Ray? Of course—I—know ye. That's my—name. I'll give her—another dollar. Where's—the—light?"

His head fell forward to his bent knees, his forehead pressing the check to the bedclothes, and the soul of old Lon Twitchell passed away on the wings of his charity.

Ray eased down the body, looked once on the childlike smile that had set on his friend's face, dragged his own hard hand across his eyes, and went out.

## GOOD-BYE, GREY TOWN, GOOD-BYE

By Arthur Stringer

GOOD-BYE, grey town, good-bye!  
The call has come, and we must forth,  
Once more unto our jocund north,—  
The white road through the open hills,  
The luring sea-line, cliffs and rills,  
Grasses and shadow, trees and rain,—  
Where panting life takes breath again!  
Good-bye, grey town; we, too, feel old,  
And wayward thou hast grown, and cold.  
One suitor less, 'tis all the same  
Where ten moths flutter round thy flame  
And burn their young lives out for thee!  
Once, arch-adept at coquetry,  
Once, too-exacting mistress, thou  
Wert life and death to us, but now  
We, too, have wakened from our dream,  
And now thy tinsel beauties seem  
Vain as thy rouge and piteous rose  
And sad, ironic, jovial pose!  
Nay, wayward siren, all too wise,  
These are not tears in thy meek eyes;  
Nay, old coquette of musk and sighs,—  
Too much thou asketh and dost give  
Not once, and on our dead dost live!  
Long since we read thee through and through,  
Where for the bay thou givest rue;  
Enough, grim breast, of love like thine  
That crushes youth from us like wine,  
Whereof thou dreamest in the lees  
To make thy mad heart more at ease,—  
Sick as thou art with this disease  
Of turgid haste and discontent  
And over-drugged with wonderment!  
But now, tired down, good-bye, for, lo,  
The call has come, and we must go,—  
Go forth to youth's own hills again,  
Earth's open seas and sun and rain,  
And leave thee brooding o'er thy gold  
And fetid perfumes, siren old,—  
With new-found lovers to caress,  
But one Ulysses now the less!  
Good-bye, grey town, good-bye!

## ON HAND CLASPS AND KISSES

By Frank S. Arnett

HAS it ever occurred to you that the greatest scoundrels are the men most loved, that colossal thieves are men of the best taste?

While these may not form a universal rule, I have been somewhat mystified, nevertheless, at the numerous instances of each.

I have in mind the owner of a residence that, in the unique character of its art treasures, outshines the homes of our most famous multi-millionaires. From roof garden to wine cellar all is bizarre and filled with beauty, a beauty breaking upon you from out the omnipresent gloom of the place like the sudden fire from a seemingly lifeless opal; here a room brought bodily from an ancient Roman villa, the fountain plashing in the center of its marble floor just as togaed and sandaled voluptuaries saw it in a long-gone century; here another, ceiling, walls and all from Constantinople; a third, lighted by a tinted globe, moving by hidden mechanism along the sides and roof and giving the strange illusion of flooding moonlight; paintings and bronzes of world-wide fame, tapestries that kings would envy, antique armor, rare Sèvres and Dresden vases, strange and priceless lamps from every land, oddities in carved wood and ivory, in porcelain, marble, onyx, gold, silver, copper and brass, for all which this man, himself a painter and sculptor, ransacked every nook and corner of the earth—a man now in hiding in some far-away country, having left behind ruined homes, a broken-hearted wife and a million in debts.

Of such are the men that have culled the choicest of the world's kisses. They

have been, perhaps, a trifle shy on hand-clasps. But in woman's eyes the rascal ever has been the martyr; heroic, fascinating, resistless. He appeals to an innate morbidity that is both fleshly and intellectual. Aaron Burr was never parched for the touch of a woman's mouth, but I am not so certain as to the Father of his Country.

She cannot herself explain it, but mere good looks seldom appeal to a woman, unless, indeed, they are god-like. She draws the line at the mucker, but the tears she has shed for the late pugilist, the Terrible Turk, would rival his present watery grave. The unusual is what she demands in him she loves. He may be ugly, but let him be abnormally so; he may be criminal, but he must be colossally so.

But even for women few men have accomplished the feat of breaking all the ten commandments, although quite a number have urged that all should be repealed. Unfortunately for these reformers the question is said to have been passed upon by a supreme court from which there is no appeal. The majority of us have, however, an infraction or two upon which to look back. Probably all have very dear aunts out in Ohio or somewhere, who, while not so unkind as to think we are no better than we ought to be, are pretty confident we might at least be better than we are.

Thus, while you have not been so criminal as to drive women insane with adoration, you have doubtless been sufficiently so to make it an effort to recall your earliest schoolgirl sweetheart, and the first time she unprotestingly permitted you to kiss her. Not in a game

of "pillow" or of "clap-in and clap-out"—that doesn't count any more than open-air opera or skyrockets let off in daylight. No, indeed, but the first time in secret. How the wonderfulness of it, the conviction that such an event had happened but seldom in the history of the world and then only to the elect, caused you to walk home as in a dream—although, arrived there, you simply had to tell of it, in sacred confidence, to your grown-up girl cousin. Which was, of course, the act of a cad—or would have been had you been older. For to tell of a kiss you have had is little less disreputable than to boast of one you never have had. But don't you just wish you could with equal frankness and innocence tell that cousin of all the kisses you have known since? As I ponder on this impossibility I am inclined to agree with an expert in such matters, who claims that the unknissed kiss is best. Certainly it has fewer regrets and vaster potentialities.

For instance, one might indulge in a daydream of the women he would like to have kissed. Not those he has personally known—that would scarcely be polite, but those of the long ago whose deeds made them, in a way, the possession of posterity. You will be surprised how, in estimating the kissableness of a woman, you reveal unexpected phases of her character. I recommend the method to future historians and biographers.

Well, whom? None of the Borgias, thank you. Nor of all the race from Messalina to Catherine of Russia, who could no more patiently bridge the space between kisses than could the traditional southern governors that between drinks. Helen of Troy, Cleopatra, Pocahontas, Pompadour, Nell Gwyn, Mary Stuart, Marie Antoinette, Josephine, Peg Woffington, Lady Hamilton?—Well, I'm not at all sure.

It's a pretty strong card for romance that, on reflection, one finds in fiction and not in history the majority of the women one would like to have kissed. For example, I should not in the least have objected to the Princess Osra:

"You forget who I am," she faltered once. "You are the beauty of the world," he answered, smiling, and he kissed her hand—a matter about which she could make no great ado, for it was not the first time that he had kissed it.

But, alas! our dainty, witching and willful Princess Osra is to many of us "less a woman who once lived and breathed, than some sweet image under whose name we fondly group all the virtues and the charms of her whom we love best, each man fashioning for himself from his chosen model her whom he calls his princess."

And so, like and yet unlike, was the love of Roxane for Christian, for in him, though she knew it not, she had imagined all Cyrano's virtues. And what, think you, is the most tragic moment in all the play? Not that in which Cyrano, about to tell the truth to Roxane, is forever silenced by the death of Christian; not that in which Roxane for the first time tells the brave Gascon of her love for another; not even when, at the very last, De Bergerac denies all—"No, no, my darling love, I did not love you!" No, but the moment when the grotesque hero sees Roxane give Christian the first kiss, kissing in truth not the lips of the one but the words of that other who but now had told her that a kiss is "a fashion of inhaling each other's heart, and of tasting, on the brink of the lips, each other's soul." There, indeed, was tragedy—for Cyrano.

The kiss of the woman a man loves, when seen or imagined given to another, has led him to the scaffold; it has filled our madhouses and the unhallowed cemeteries of the suicide. Lucrece, in a more frightful form, knew, as Roxane did not, the tragedy of the kiss in monstrous masquerade. I say nothing for Roxane. The mummer is ever the *matinée* idol; never the dramatist.

You will notice that I have not suggested an analysis based on the problem as to whom you could have loved. That is different, and a gentleman of the alphabet has already touched upon it. Those he selected have been deliciously



termed "a choice little literary seraglio." Being free from congressional ambition, I may confess that I have one of my own. Long before the Indiana man discovered her, Princess Mary of England was my sweetheart, but Clement Marot, troubadour, not Charles Brandon, was my rival and Louis XII's.

However, I am not particular. That is to say, they need not all be of the blood royal. I have long had a fondness for "Dolly"—or did have until she married. Not that that always lessens a woman's fascination. But in her case it has. She hasn't been as witty since. And as the desire to kiss her lips was due largely to what she said with them, it has made a difference. For a mouth, as such, is nothing. It has as intimate an association with mastication as with osculation. Necessarily therefore it depends upon whose mouth it is. Close your eyes and try to imagine it's some one else you're kissing and you will fail dismally. The throat or shoulder, the lady's hand—yes, possibly you may deceive yourself and be happy. But never the kissed lips. Their touch is speechful, personal, unmistakable.

But, after all, the realists win out, for various experiments force the conclusion that for kissing purposes a live woman is preferable.

When it comes to shaking hands it's quite a different matter, it being quite evident that most of the hand-shakable men are dead. Which merely resolves itself into the fact that history and fiction have idealized man and never yet have done justice to woman.

Not all are dead. Perhaps you had a Mr. Dombey sort of father—this is purely supposititious; he may have been a very Col. Newcome for all I know. But supposing him the former, you probably remember when your chum's father came on during your junior year at college how you envied that hearty hand clasp at the station when father and son, thus joined, looked at each other, the one with confidence, the other with pride, both with a *camaraderie* that, as you afterward remarked, almost with tears, was simply bully.

And then when "the governor," in a

careless way that fairly staggered you, yet caused certain things to be seen in a new light, asked if anybody would have a glass of beer, how you all in a sort of speechless delight sat down with him at the tavern table and drank the liquor of the Teutons as though it were that of the gods, and tried to forget the *blasé* air with which you had ordered absinthe the night before.

How different would have been the meeting of Latins! in comparison with which how sturdy seems the Anglo-Saxon hand clasp! And yet, again supposing the Dombey father, if, when the mother died that alone had bridged the difference in your natures, this Mr. Dombey took you by the hand, perhaps for the first time in his life, and said, with an unknown and un-Dombeyan kindness: "My boy, we must get closer to one another now"—if, when he said this, you did not respond with the kiss of a son and the worded desire that you might be in truth a son, if you did not do and say this little, then let it come back to you in the years to come when kisses are offered you for sale and hands are held out only to receive your bribe.

This, however, is not viewing the subject from the standpoint of tradition, of poetry and song. The denunciations of one or two micrological fanatics have had no effect upon a pleasant pastime whose popularity has an antediluvian ancestry.

More fatal is likely to be the stage, whereon we are surfeited with an endless succession of dramas of the too-much-kissed. In "The Dead City" the man drowns the woman in order that he may dream of the kisses it were sinful to give her in life. A sacrifice of kisses in "The Joy of Living" also lands us at the undertaker's. "Iris," by her kisses, saves herself for a time from poverty, but not from ultimate arrival on the pavement. "The Two Schools" showed us, in fact, merely the two schools of kissing: that of the gay and debonair kisser, and that of the ponderous and remorseful one. And finally we had Decci's play, simply, frankly and, so, comfortingly, entitled

"The Kiss"—which all the others might as well have been called, reserving possibly a sub-title of "The Cuss" for the final act.

The sin of the stage kiss usually appears to be in inverse ratio to the amount of cash on hand. In real life, kissing is like essay writing. To be properly done both require freedom from care. It would be difficult work if you had to put on your overcoat before seating yourself to write of the barbaric splendor of the Durbar, or of luxury of apparel when the same morning you had tortured the umbrella cover into a cravat. So, too, it is an effort to kiss satisfactorily when you have the distressing knowledge that it can't be followed by a suggestion of supper at Sherry's. The real foundation for the kiss is a plethora of cash and a poverty of conscience.

Your attire, too, is no unimportant factor. The hero is always well groomed. Gold epaulets and dancing plumes inspire us to do or die. An immaculate infantry dashes cheering into the mouth of hell. The dusty mob slinks trembling to cover. And so the shabby man is a poor lover. Enoch Arden came back out at elbows, whereas even the cotillion hadn't wrinkled the shirt front of the chap that so peremptorily invited Maud to come into the garden. He knew his business, did that admirer of horticulture. Four A. M. is a propitious hour, particularly in the case of a *débutante*—always providing you have no delusions regarding her. An Englishman recently displayed astounding wide-awakeness in his remark that "the man who has sat out three dances with the *débutante* knows more of her than does her mother."

Glancing at the whole osculatory harvest field, from buds to dowagers, it will be found that it may roughly be divided into two classes: the kiss with which one realizes he kisses a woman, and that with which he is transported at the thought that he kisses the one woman above all others. You were reminded in these pages not long ago that a certain millionaire of old never twice

touched the same lips. Now you may be certain this was with him neither principle nor precaution. It was sheer hard luck. He had never chanced to touch those that would have been to him as were those of the first woman to the first man, as though none other existed.

For each of us, unmet as yet perhaps, and if so then, perhaps, the better for content, there is one certain touch of the lips and in all the world the touch of one certain mouth, that is like numerous articles announced in the advertising pages—once taken we use no other brand. That is, we wish we could use no other. But sometimes it has come in a dream that has never returned; sometimes in a desire that has never been realized; sometimes in a sin that has never been repeated, and, alas! never repented. So, in time, you doubt the dream, despair of the hope, are faithless to the sin.

Did harm ever result from a kiss? And did hypocrisy ever lurk in a hand clasp? In Paris there is talk of a union of these two in a revival of the lost art of kissing a woman's hand. Smile if you will, but, come now, is there no woman on earth or in her grave whose hand you have kissed? If not, then you have never met the woman, or you are too normal, too contented to be human or to be happy; for, if contentment is not the actual assassin of happiness, at least the great happinesses, of one of which the hand kiss is a symbol, are not for the contented man.

I would not welcome the revival of the hand kiss, however, were it urged as the successor to the hand clasp, for now it is in secret that it is kissed and therein rests the charm. There may be those that still believe that in secluded nooks the touch of lips oftenest is known. In truth, it is oftenest in public; alone, the man dares express his adoration, and oftentimes seeks to hide his tears, by the long pressure of his lips to the hand of the woman he loves. And there is this to be said in its favor; many a man has bent to kiss a woman's hand the better to hide the villainy in his eyes, and few there are that have

not touched a woman's lips closing the eyes meanwhile, the better to deceive themselves that it is another's lips they kiss; so that the false touch to the hand is less guilty than the false touch to the lips, for the one may be treachery to life, or property or pride, but the other is treachery to the heart.

But with all its incidental disadvantages we cannot afford utterly to do away with the kiss. That Montana should attempt legally to do so comes without a shock. But Virginia—where the kiss was the weapon of the cavalier! Its history is more or less honorable. Without it there would have been little romance in the world. It has, too, dethroned kings, destroyed empires, created religions, brought about wars in which died thousands of ruffianly heroes that had never known a kiss save those they'd stolen.

As to its origin, I take no stock in the fable of the Greek shepherdess who, wishing to present an opal to her sweetheart, his hands at the moment busied with the flock, pressed it between his lips with her own and thus brought about the birth of the kiss. I venture to believe that the Chinese swineherd who, according to Confucius *via* Charles Lamb, discovered roast pork was also and simultaneously the discoverer of the kiss, some Chinese maiden attempting to take the new-found succulent morsel from his very teeth.

Or perhaps the kiss is a relic of prehistoric cannibalism. "I could just eat you up" is, I am informed, an expression not totally dissociated from the kissing of babies. I have at times experienced a longing for their slaughter, but never by that method. Neither of

these theories is as poetic as that of the shepherdess, but they are quite as probable. Roast pork, too, in case of love in a cottage, is far luckier than an opal, although you are more likely to receive a kiss in exchange for the gem. But the combination of kiss and opal sounds doubly ominous. The kiss alone is sufficiently so in all conscience.

But, whatever its origin or history, there are times in the lives of even the man and woman in love when the kiss is insufficient, forgotten. It is for the moment foreign to the overwhelming happiness with which those long parted meet—those that have shared in one of the rare, true and all-engulfing passions that seem destined to defy death itself. The hands of such instinctively, blindly seek each other in the first shock of the unexpected; the world fades away, leaving them there alone, the eyes of each sinking with speechless longing into those of the other, yet no physical touch save this feverish hand clasp that later is realized to have been unconscious in its cruelty.

And this, I take it, is one of the supreme moments of life. For while it may be beautiful or repulsive, sacred or ludicrous—and it has been all of these and more—we cannot evade or laugh away the fact that love is the greatest and the mightiest thing in the world. And when, at such a moment in the lives of those that love, the kiss is forgotten, we may conclude that the hand clasp rises above it as a symbol of life.

Murmuring a prayer, you and I that are left clasp hands across the coffin of our friend; we lean over and press a kiss upon the unresponsive lips.



## 'TWIXT CUP AND LIP

By Guy Wetmore Carryl

LIEUTENANT EUGÈNE DROUIN slid from his saddle with a little grunt, slipped his arm through the bridle rein, and then, with his riding crop, rapped smartly on the round, tin-topped table nearest to him.

At the summons a small, square door on the left of the archway snapped open, and a stumpy waiter, shaped like a domino, appeared abruptly on the sill.

"*Froid!*" shouted the officer.

The domino waiter made a vague gesture in the air with one fat hand, and then vanished as suddenly as he had appeared, closing the door behind him with a slam.

If he had but seen fit to observe "Cuckoo!" the whole affair—the sort of *châlet* from which he emerged, the small square door, and his own performance—would have borne a remarkable resemblance to a Swiss clock striking one.

Lieutenant Drouin detached an end of the rein from the snaffle bar, knotted it about the back of one chair, and flung himself into another.

"*Poof!*" he said, and lit a cigarette.

It was exactly one o'clock, and the Pré Catalan was deserted, save for a half dozen cats of various breeds and colors, chasing each other about under the chairs and tables, and two brilliant macaws, sitting on wooden perches in an apparent state of coma, broken only by an occasional reflective "Wawk!"

Once a high cart flashed in an opening of the trees to the left, and then disappeared with a rattle of harness chains, in the direction of the Porte Dauphine. For the rest, there was nothing to suggest that Paris might not be fifty kilometers distant. All the world was at breakfast.

Eugène stretched his legs, squinted at the toes of his narrow riding boots, and swore tenderly at himself for having refused the invitation of the Marquise de Baucheron. Experience might have taught him that Rosa de Mirecourt would not be in the Bois that morning. It was a peculiarity of Rosa's to be in evidence on every occasion when her presence was not to be desired, and never to turn up when one was in the mood to chat or breakfast with her.

Eugène had measured the Acacias bridle path at a canter eight times since noon, scanning the driveway for a glimpse of the blue and scarlet victoria with the cream-colored mares, and all in vain. Rosa was nowhere to be seen. By this time, no doubt, some other lieutenant of *chasseurs* was thrashing out the latest gossip of the *demi-monde* over her breakfast table in the Rue de Bassano, and still another was, in all probability, filling his place at Madame de Baucheron's, and eating the Friday breakfast—*sole cardinale* and *aufs brouillés aux crevettes*—for which her chef was famous. *Baste!* what a world!

The domino waiter reappeared presently in the doorway, came quickly across to Eugène's table with a curious, tottering shuffle born of his swaddling apron, and served a small white mug of cold milk as if it had been Château Latour-Blanche.

"Beautiful weather, my lieutenant," he ventured, cheerfully, for he had done his service, and knew the meaning of the single epaulet.

But Eugène was in no mood for light conversation. For sole reply, he paid his score, and then drank the milk slowly, looking out toward the lower lake,

across the wide stretch of fresh grass mottled with flecks of sunlight sifted through the foliage above.

At his side Vivandière nuzzled the turf along the border of the graveled *terrasse*, the lithe muscles rippling in her polished neck, and her deep eye shifting now and again in its socket as she looked doubtfully, almost pleadingly, toward her master. They were well known on the Allée and the bridle path of the Avenue du Bois, these two—the young *chasseur*, tall, clean-cut and slender, with a complexion like a girl's, and the gayety of Polichinelle himself, in full, red breeches and tunic of black and light blue; and the chestnut mare, nervous and alert, with her racing lines, and her long, leisurely gallop, superb in its suggestion of reserve speed and unflagging endurance.

The fates were kind to Lieutenant Eugène Drouin. Paris, spring, youth, an ample fortune, a commission in the *chasseurs*, good looks, a thoroughbred Arab, and half a dozen women frankly in love with him—surely there was nothing lacking; and yet he knew that something *was* lacking, though he could not have said what, as he sat sprawling in his little iron chair at the Pré Catalan that morning.

He straightened himself suddenly, as she came up the driveway from the left, and then arose with a stiff salute, for, a pace or so behind, walked Vieux César—so called by an irreverent garrison—leading two horses, one limping badly. Eugène had seen him but once, at the review of the Quatorze Juillet, but, though he was not in uniform now, the fierce gray mustache and keen black eyes of General Tournadour were too familiar to Parisians to pass unrecognized in a throng, much less under circumstances such as these. When one has been Military Governor of Paris, and held the portfolio of war, one does not achieve incognito, merely by donning a black *civile*. So Eugène saluted the general—but with his eyes on the girl.

She was not beautiful, he told himself, in that first moment of surprise and swift observation, but about her, as she barely glanced at him in passing, there

was an indefinably compellant charm which arrested his attention and held it, like an unrecognized but strangely sweet perfume, suddenly met with in a familiar spot where there is no apparent reason for its presence. Without doubt, it was a very little thing.

He knew enough of such matters to be aware that an unanalyzed attraction of the kind which, at first glance, makes a woman appear utterly irresistible, is apt, on closer acquaintance, to resolve itself into the merest trifle of dissimilarity from other women—a tilt of a lip-corner, a dimple in an unlikely spot, a trick with the hands or the head, a rebellious wisp of hair. For he was very philosophical, and very wise, was Eugène, and twenty-six years of age, into the bargain. So there was nothing one could tell him about women. But, in any event, there was no time to define the particular charm in question.

He felt rather than saw it, as she went by him, with the faintest possible whiff of orris, and the gleam of a patent-leather boot at the edge of her habit. No, she was certainly not beautiful, but she was something dangerously, deliciously akin, said Lieutenant Drouin to himself; and that, in the unloveliest costume that can be worn by woman-kind—a deep green habit of extreme severity, and a squat derby, like a boy's, with an elastic strap brutally grooving her ruddy hair.

General Tournadour did not follow the girl beyond the spot where Eugène was standing, but drew up abruptly, and indicated the lamed horse with a gesture of irritation.

"A beautiful affair, my word, lieutenant!" he said. "This animal stumbled back there, and has received some injury, I know not what. We have walked from the Allée, in hope of finding a *sapin* here, and all without result."

The young officer was already feeling the animal's hocks with a practiced hand. There was a swelling just above the right fore fetlock, and as he touched it, the horse winced and kicked out sharply.

"A bad wrench, I fear, my general," said Eugène. "He should have an

hour's rest, at least." Then, looking quickly at the saddle, "It is evident that madame cannot ride him home. No doubt they will give him a stall in the farm stable. You can send a groom out for him this afternoon."

"*Dieu!* That is very well, monsieur," answered the former minister of war, with an air of perplexity amusingly in contrast with his fierce mustache. "But, my daughter——"

Now, Lieutenant Drouin, in matters where a woman was concerned, was nothing if not adroit. He sent a flying glance in the direction of the girl. She had aroused one of the comatose macaws from his lethargy, and now stood watching him as he munched the biscuit she had taken from a neighboring table. And again Eugène was conscious of an inexplicable but very decided little thrill.

"If Mademoiselle Tournadour—if you, my general, will consider me at your service, I shall be glad to have you make use of my mare Vivandière, here. She is as gentle as a lamb—but, perhaps, not unworthy of being seen in company with your own horse."

The general's eyes twinkled at the boyishness of the remark. He knew a horse as well as another, Vieux César, and to describe the superb Arab before him as being, perhaps, not unworthy of being seen in company with his own sturdy charger was a bit of satire much to his relish.

"*Merci!*" he answered. "It is the proposal of an officer and a gentleman. But my daughter must decide if it is possible for us to accept it. In the matter of names, monsieur, you have me at an advantage."

"Pardon!" said the other. "I should have realized that. I am Eugène Drouin, Lieutenant in the Twenty-ninth *Chasseurs*."

"Natalie!" cried the general, beckoning with his crop.

As Mademoiselle Tournadour came forward, the young *chasseur* again made a confidant of himself, this time for the satisfaction of observing that he was an imbecile, and that a man who could not tell at the first glance whether or not a woman was entirely beautiful, deserved

not to have an opportunity of discovering the fact at all. Their eyes met fairly, his glowing with delighted surprise, hers touched with that expression of negative inquiry and polite interest which immediately precedes an introduction.

"My daughter," said the general, prodding the air with his crop in her direction. "Lieutenant Drouin, of the Twenty-ninth *Chasseurs*," he added, prodding again, in the direction of Eugène. "Monsieur le lieutenant has been so kind as to offer thee the use of his own horse, and suggests that we leave Le Cid here to be cared for until I can send Victor for him. I tell him thou art the one to decide."

"Monsieur, you are truly kind," said the girl, easily—*too* easily, thought Eugène!—"but it would be to presume upon your generosity."

"But it is nothing," protested the officer. "*Voyons!* It is but a step to La Muette, and there I have the *ceinture!*"

"You are stationed at the *quartier de cavalerie?*" asked Tournadour.

"Rue Desaix, yes, *mon général*," answered Eugène. Then, turning again to the girl, "Surely you must consent, mademoiselle. It is the simplest way. And this afternoon, if you will permit me——"

"Yes," put in the general, "and this afternoon Victor can leave your horse at the *caserne* as he is coming to take Le Cid."

"*Eh, dis-donc*, Natalie," he added, fretfully, observing that the girl still hesitated. "Don't make difficulties, my dear. There is breakfast—yes, breakfast to be considered, and it is one, and past. Since the lieutenant is so kind——"

"Since the lieutenant is so kind," said his daughter, with a smile, "*eh bien*, I accept."

It was the work of a moment for Eugène to shift the side-saddle from Le Cid to Vivandière. The general had already mounted, and was gazing off toward the Porte Dauphine, with his nose in the air, as if he scented breakfast from afar.

"She is very beautiful, monsieur,



your Vivandière, and you are very good," said Mademoiselle Tournadour, as the *chasseur* tightened the girth, after her boot had touched his hand, and she was in the saddle.

"She is very fortunate, mademoiselle," answered Eugène, curiously embarrassed for one so skilled in compliment. "If she wins, I shall feel that she owes the race to this good omen."

"The race?" said the girl.

"The Officers' Steeplechase at Auteuil, on Sunday."

"You ride her yourself?"

There was a strange little note of more than casual interest in the question, and Eugène looked up suddenly. For the second time their eyes met.

"Yes," he answered. "Why?"

"Why? But nothing, monsieur, except, perhaps, to wish you *bonne chance*."

She touched Vivandière with her heel.

"Adieu, monsieur," she added, "and a thousand thanks!"

Eugène bowed.

"For nothing," he said, "and *au revoir*, mademoiselle!"

Then he watched them out of sight, with his arm through Le Cid's bridle rein, and his trim English saddle sprawling at his feet.

There was something delightfully ingenuous, to Eugène's way of thinking, in Vieux César's method of unloading the burden of his embarrassment on the shoulders of the first young lieutenant who crossed his path, and then riding off serenely to breakfast, leaving the other, as it were, to gather up and disentangle the loose ends of the situation. He was half amused, half annoyed, that his offer of Vivandière had not been taken less as a matter of course, but, in view of the circumstances, he attended with fairly good grace to the details of stabling Le Cid, and arranging to send for his saddle, and then struck out at a swinging gait for the footpath to La Muette. For all of which there was a sufficient reason in the person of Mademoiselle Tournadour.

Now, as he revolved the meeting in his mind, he found that it was not in the least degree a surprise. Somehow, he had always expected that this girl would step suddenly into his life, with her ruddy hair, and her gray eyes. It seemed to him to be something which the natural evolution of that life demanded. He had sounded every note in the gamut of emotions appropriate to a man in his position.

He had had his serious, almost ascetic moods, his despondencies, his flights of folly, his impulses of stern ambition, his hours of morbid brooding and of reckless gayety. He could no longer number his love affairs with any approach to accuracy. They were hopelessly jumbled in his memory, by very reason of their number and their triviality. Here and there a fact stood out from its fellows—the Baronne de Banis, Lady Mary Kaswellyn, Rosa de Mircourt, or the Marquise de Baucheron—but none of these impelled him to regret. There were no entanglements, no uncomfortable circumstances to recall. Not a stone lay in the way of the gate of the future, as, in his imagination, it swung open before him.

As we have said, the fates were kind to Lieutenant Eugène Drouin. The current of experience had borne his individual shallop over deeps and shallows safely and with a song, and, now that a sudden turn of the stream had shown him Natalie Tournadour waiting on the bank, it seemed to him to be the most natural thing imaginable, something which intuition had taught him was inevitable, and, what was better, which experience told him was desirable. The event had found him ready and willing to make room for her beside him in the boat, and, so, continue the journey in her company, well content. He bowed to fate politely, with a graceful *merci*!

For forty-eight hours he watched, almost as if he had been a disinterested outsider, this pleasant fancy molding the details of his future life. He reckoned his *rentes* anew, assigning a due proportion to a little hotel in the Monceau quarter, to a villa at Houlgate, to

horses, household expenses, his wife's allowance, servants, entertainments, a month at Aix, another at Nice, a third at Homburg. He saw himself retired, and in the Chambre. And, over all, hovered, like a luminous presiding angel, the presence of Mademoiselle Tournadour—Madame Drouin!

So Sunday came, and with it breakfast at Armenonville with two fellow officers, and the growing exhilaration of the approaching race. Eugène was in his gayest mood—for was not Vivandière not only the winner of last year's steeplechase, but to-day in better form than she had ever been? But he allowed his good spirits to be touched, now and again, with a gentle, pleasurable melancholy, as the violins of the tziganes glided into the long, languorous swell of the *Valse Bleue*, and his handsome eyes clouded thoughtfully, and his fine mouth drooped, so that Gaston Cavaignac rallied him joyously upon the new affair, which alone could account for such *tristesse*. It lent an added zest, this. Eugène smiled, and was glad that in his denial of the charge rang so little of conviction.

The first race had been already run, as the three officers slipped through the main entrance of Auteuil, and made their way past the betting booths, to the grass oval around which the horses, in charge of stable lads, were slowly circling. It was one of May's clearest and most brilliant afternoons. The gravel pathways and stretches of vivid turf were thronged with the best-known men and women of the two great Parisian worlds of sport and fashion, and the air rang with gay gossip and spirited discussion. But Eugène had ears for none of this, and eyes but for two things—Vivandière, blanketed and swinging around the oval with her long, sure stride, and Natalie Tournadour, in a delicious gown of soft blue, standing at the side of Vieux César. Life at that moment was good to live. The *chasseur* drew a quick breath of pleased surprise. She was there, then, to see him win. He might have known!

A mixture of sudden, unfamiliar embarrassment and boyish vanity caused

him to avoid her eye as he made a turn of the oval, consulting with his stable lad about the mare's condition, but he held himself very straight, and was pleasantly conscious that his tunic was new, and his boots a veritable triumph of Coquillot's. When he went back to his companions his eyes were glowing.

"Content?" asked Cavaignac.

"*Je te crois, mon vieux!*" he answered. "One never can say, but it is certain that no one has a better chance. She is perfection!"

"There is the white," put in Lieutenant Mors, dubiously.

Eugène vouchsafed the rival racer a brief, contemptuous glance. It was a lean, powerfully built brute, with an astonishing reach to even the leisurely stride with which he paced the oval. A trainer would have had something to say of those lithe shoulders, and that long barrel, dwindling along the flanks, and that easy swing of haunch and swathed hock. But Eugène was not a trainer.

"A fine animal," he observed, carelessly, "but there is no comparison. One has only to look at Vivandière."

"*Tiens!*" cried Gaston, "the saddling-bell! I am off to put five louis on you *gagnant*, and five *placé*. *Bonne chance, vieux!*"

In truth, the saddling-bell was jangling from the little pavilion to the left, and the officers hurrying forward to weigh in. As he passed into the inclosure, Eugène glanced over his shoulder. General Tournadour and his daughter were still standing at the oval side, and he had a glimpse of Natalie clapping her hands and pointing, as the stable lad slipped the blanket off Vivandière. But he made no sign, even when, three minutes later, he mounted, within five meters of where they stood. Time enough when the victory was won, to claim his reward in the gray eyes of which he had been dreaming. His heart leaped, nevertheless, as he gave Vivandière the rein. It was the voice of Vieux César, almost at his side:

"Be not afraid, *ma petite*. There is no doubt that he is going to win."

No doubt, indeed, with her eyes upon

him and her heart praying for his success!

Once upon the course he swept the vast inclosure with a glance, and his blood danced with the excitement of the moment, and the brilliancy of the scene. To the right the great tribunes of the *pesage*, and the chair-dotted turf in front, glowed with a shifting rainbow of spring gowns and vivid parasols, and sparkled with a myriad of white waistcoats, drifting, like large, lazy snowflakes, to and fro; to the left lay the vast inclosure of the *pelouse*, flooded with dazzling sunlight, its thousands circling here and there like ants. Beyond the race course swept away, smooth and green, to the long rows of trees in their new foliage, banked along the Route de Boulogne and the Allée des Fortifications. It was a day of days, whether one stood inside the rail, straining for a glimpse of the horses, or swept slowly to the left, on the course itself, toward the starting point, with a thoroughbred's flanks quivering between one's knees!

As the horses circled about the start, getting into position, Eugène's keen, handsome eyes were busy with trivial details, dwindled by distance to mere specks—two men, leaning far over the rails, signaling bets to each other across the track, a gleam of orange from the finish flag, the starter rocking toward him on a ridiculously fat pony. Then, in an instant, every faculty came taut like a stretched string, and they were off, in a thunder of hoofs and a whirl of flying sod. He saw a red flag fluttering stiffly in the breeze as he swept past, and heard, in the distance, the whirr of the signal gong from the judge's stand. It was a fair start. He touched Vivandière lightly with his hand, and, at the signal, felt her lengthen under him into her long, magnificent gallop. The tribunes and the crowded *pelouse* rushed down upon him with a murmur of many voices. The long, double line of faces at the rail slid past like white dots, and the dark green hedge of the water-jump sprang out of the track at his feet. *Houp, ma belle!* A whisp of brushed twigs, a gleam of silver water passing

under, a thud of hoofs on the soft turf beyond, and they were over, and away into the southern loop to the left!

As he swung to the north again he saw the ants of the *pelouse* scurrying across to the rail along the transverse cut. Let them run, *les drôles!* They had need to if they would see the passing of Vivandière! Past the high hurdle—so much the better that one did not have to take it!—and down the transverse to the second water-jump. It was easy, that. The mare crossed it like a bird, and Eugène saw the tribunes again from the corner of his eye, and laughed at the shrill "Bravo!" of a little grisette in a red hat, who flew past him, leaning on the rail.

Vivandière was well into the left reach of the northern loop before Eugène fairly realized what that smooth, empty width of turf before him meant. He was leading—had been leading from the very start! And, somewhere back there in the gay throng, two gray eyes were watching him, straining to catch each movement of the blue tunic, each bound of the gallant mare. He threw back his head and laughed at the clear, wide sky. It was very good to be alive!

So, with a broad sweep to the right, into the home stretch, the last curve of the giant "8" he had described. It lay ahead, full and fair, cut by one low hedge. And then—

Thud! thud! thud!

The sound battered its way into the *chasseur's* understanding, and hurt, as if it had been, in verity, that of blow on blow. He leaned forward, spurring the mare to her utmost endeavor. And she responded, but still the beat of following hoofs grew louder. For Vivandière was thoroughbred, and she had kept her maddest pace from the start. It was reserved for racers of ignoble spirit to hold their greatest effort for the end.

Thud! thud! thud!

Once more *pelouse* rushed down upon him, not now with a murmur of voices, but with a mighty roar, that swelled, deafening, into his ears.

"*Flambeau! Flambeau! C'est Flambeau qui gagne!*"

There was a gasp of short-coming breath at his elbow, a gleam of white, tense neck, a flash of red breeches and of polished boots, and the Steeplechase Militaire was run, with Vivandière second, and the lean, white Flambeau winner by a length.

The officers rode back slowly, past the applauding *tribunes*. Eugène saw dimly that it was a colonel of infantry who rode Flambeau, a meter ahead of him, but his thoughts were more for Natalie than for himself or his successful competitor. Poor little girl! She had been so anxious for his victory, and no doubt so confident, after the brave words of Vieux César. But, after all—second! It was not so bad in a field of twelve. But he had been wrong not to speak to her before he mounted. Well, he would atone for that, never fear! Moreover, when once they were married, he would give her Vivandière—the cause of their first meeting—the reason of their present sympathy! It was a good thought.

Eugène did not find the general and his daughter readily in the vast room in the *pesage*. Three times he made the circuit of the *tribunes*, scanning the tiers of seats, and threading his way through the little wooden chairs upon the turf in front. Once he passed Cavagnac and Mors, walking arm in arm, who swore at him picturesquely for his defeat. Vivandière had paid but seventeen francs fifty *placé*, and so they had only seventy-five to show for the five louis they had placed upon her *gagnant*. The privilege of calling her master *tête de laitue* was but trifling recompense, and they strolled on, surprised that one noted for his eloquence in this variety of obloquy did not deign to reply.

Finally, at the doors of the little refreshment pavilion, and talking with a colonel of infantry, he found the objects of his quest, and went up eagerly, saluting. Vieux César greeted him with heartiness.

"Ah, lieutenant! Our preserver of Friday—*quoi?* Natalie, see who is here—our preserver of Friday!"

The girl was radiant. Her cheeks were flushed, and the gray eyes shone with a brightness that set Eugène's heart pounding so hard that he felt its throbbing must be dimpling the breast of his tunic.

"What a magnificent race!" she said, giving him her hand. "You have cause to be proud of Vivandière. It is something to have ridden such a horse."

"It is always something to ride a good horse," said Eugène, looking into her eyes, "and it is something, also, to be second in a good race, but it is more to be first. And I had my reasons for wishing to be that, mademoiselle."

Natalie smiled.

"Ah, *sans doute!*" she answered. "But you must not call me mademoiselle, monsieur. You must know that since yesterday I am a serious married woman. And what is more, my husband rode Flambeau! Am I not a veritable mascot?"

She laid her hand on the arm of the officer at her side.

"My husband, Colonel Montrésor," she added. "Paul, this is the officer of whom I spoke to you—who was so kind—Lieutenant—"

She turned to Eugène, blushing divinely, with an embarrassed little laugh.

"Oh, pray forgive me!" she said. "I am so stupid—but—but—I have forgotten your name!"



# HOW JULIA WAS SAVED

By George Horton

Author of "The Long Straight Road," "Like Another Helen," Etc.

"JULIA, may I present Count Plebanski?"

The ice was magnificent. A thaw of the day before had spread a thin coating over it, which, freezing during the night, had left the surface firm and as smooth as a mirror. It was early in the forenoon, moreover, and there were not many skaters, a fact which allowed the count to display his exquisite grace in his favorite pastime, as he came swinging down the long stretch with that tall, athletic beauty, Mrs. Wheeler.

"Count Plebanski?" faltered Julia, not quite catching the unusual name.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Wheeler, "a real, live count." Plebanski bowed very low, with his hand upon his heart, murmuring:

"I am charmed, charmed."

Tom Wheeler, an irrepressible youth of fourteen, sadly afflicted with the punning habit, shouted, as he cut a circle backward around the group:

"I guess he's some a count, anyway."

Julia was not very sure upon her skates, and her feet nearly flew out from under her as she returned the salutation.

"Permit me," volunteered the count, gliding to her side and holding her firmly by the arm while she danced a perilous jig, accompanied by a succession of screams.

"Have no fear, madam," said the count, "I will not let you fall."

"There, now I'm all right at last," gasped Julia. "You can let go of me now. Thank you so much!" She was not a very pretty girl. Her mouth was too large for symmetry, and her nose

was tip-tilted. Neither were her eyes, which were a pale blue, in any way remarkable. She was a little thing, and vivacious, as most little people are. Everybody liked her because her heart was in the right place, and she seemed always thinking of others rather than of herself. Her smile was most engaging, too, despite the fact that her teeth were not exactly regular.

"I came down in the morning with Tom to learn," she explained. "I expected to find the pond deserted at this hour."

"Ah, I hope that you will not regret having met me?" protested the count. "If madam will allow me," and here he bowed gracefully in the direction of Mrs. Wheeler, "to deprive myself of her charming society for a few moments, I shall be glad to give you a lesson myself."

His voice had that quality which is so fatal to many women, a deferential tone that verged close upon tenderness. It possessed a masterly element, too, as though he were talking both to a queen and a child.

"Take a turn with him, Julia," advised Mrs. Wheeler, "he skates like an angel!"

"Did you ever see an angel with a skate on?" asked Tom. "Miss Witwer acted like one a moment ago," for which doubtful compliment he was reproved by his sister-in-law.

The count extended his hands and Julia Witwer was soon swinging down the pond with a tall man whose rhythmic movement was so sure and his balance so true that she felt as steady as though she were clinging to a tree. The

uncomfortable, wobbly feeling disappeared, and for the first time in her life the poetic exhilaration and intoxication of this magnificent sport sparkled in her eyes.

"I feel as if I could do it alone!" she cried.

"Very soon you will be able to," replied the count; "you have that perfect grace which is necessary to the making of a good skater. Clumsy, awkward people cannot learn it at all, but you—you are a born skater!"

When he brought her back again to Mrs. Wheeler, and let her go, the girl found that she actually had acquired considerable confidence. Then the count performed a few evolutions, most intricate, yet executed with such ease that he did not appear to be aiming at display. Tom, following in imitation, sat down with such emphasis that the tears appeared in his eyes, but he managed to exclaim, pluckily:

"It's an ice sport, isn't it?"

Plebanski wore a short coat of rough material—to give the greatest freedom to his long legs—fur gauntlets, and a seal cap. His features were thin and symmetrical, save for his nose, which transgressed by being a trifle large; but that's a good fault in a nose. His hair was black and abundant, his eyes were dark as midnight, and his smile, though mechanical, was dazzling. He had no comprehension of humor, but showed his teeth frequently as a sign of amiability or politeness. He was enveloped in an atmosphere of mystery and sadness, which corroborated the rumor that he was a Polish patriot, and rendered him doubly interesting to the ladies. His manners were perfect, albeit they were, like his nose, a trifle exaggerated. His visiting card bore the legend, "Le Comte Thaddeus Plebanski," surmounted by a coronet that acted as an open sesame to the best houses in Washington. None of the ladies who admitted him to their drawing-rooms, nor the men whom he honored with his society, inquired too carefully into his antecedents. One might as well prove his own silverware spurious as to discredit a count, once secured.

The next time that Julia met him was at a White House reception to the Diplomatic Corps. Strangely enough, she had been thinking about him, and she tried to tell her escort, Lieutenant Harding, of her romantic adventure on the pond in the grounds of the Soldiers' Home, but the noise made by the Marine Band was so terrific that conversation was impossible. This was while they formed a couple of drops in the long stream of humanity in evening dress that was flowing into the large dining-room. Once there, she forgot about the count, as her sole object in life for the time being centered in the effort to keep herself from being crushed and her gown torn. She was squeezed out of the farther door at length, made a low curtsy to President Roosevelt, and was rewarded by his hearty, "I am dee-lighted to see you, dee-lighted!" She bowed to the President's wife and a line of people whom she did not know, and emerged into a less crowded room, where she beheld Plebanski, strolling about with his hands behind his back, evidently very much at home in a scene of this kind. He was the sort of man who actually looks well in a dress suit. If he had been handsome on the ice, he was now that and something more; he was distinguished-looking now.

Miss Witwer introduced the two men, and the lieutenant inquired:

"Are you a member of the Diplomatic Corps, count?"

"Ah," he replied, sadly, "my unfortunate country is no longer represented among the nations of the world. Did it hold up its head as in the days when Sobieski drove the Turks from the gates of Vienna, some member of my family would no doubt be here as ambassador—perhaps, who knows?—even I myself. But the proud glory of Poland is departed forever, and her children are under the oppressor's heel."

"And freedom shrieked when Kosciuszko died," quoted the lieutenant, who was an excellent soldier, but whose entire knowledge of Polish history was comprised in that one line.

"Ah, Kosciuszko!" cried Plebanski,



and he made a couple of turns about the room with them, descanting eloquently on the virtues of the great patriot. He managed, before taking leave of Miss Witwer, to pay her a delicate and seemingly inadvertent compliment on her charming appearance and to obtain permission to call. Julia bought a history of Poland the very next day, and her sympathetic little heart went out to its poor people with quick warmth. She began to think of Plebanski as another Kosciuszko.

The count mailed the following letter to a Polish Jew in London:

SAMUEL WOLFSOHN, DEAR SIR: I am in receipt of your last letter threatening to cut off my monthly allowance if I do not hasten the business which brought me over here. My dear Samuel, if you do this, you will be more foolish than the woman who killed the goose that laid the golden egg. You will not even have received an egg! You are very unwise to annoy me at this moment with sordid details, when I am engaged upon such a delicate matter. These American heiresses are won by love, Samuel, and love is something that you know nothing about. It is true that my title is genuine and that I am a most attractive man, but we do not get heiresses here by simply advertising titles for sale. Some preliminary courting is necessary, at least for the sake of appearances. But there is no doubt of my ultimate success. Read, for your encouragement, the list of American heiresses who have married foreign noblemen, in the Almanac of the *New York Daily Daily*, which I am sending you by the same mail. I can imagine you gloating over the fortunes taken out of this country! The fact is, my Samuel, that I am practically accepted by a widow who is worth \$100,000, but I think that a real count should bring a larger sum. And now I am going to show you how honorable and disinterested I am in this matter. The widow is a most attractive lady, and I am quite enraptured by her charms, but I have now made the acquaintance of a little fool who is worth \$300,000! That is more like, and I have made an excellent impression. I shall lay siege to her heart immediately, meanwhile keeping the charming widow on the hook. But there is no chance of losing her, as she is quite daft over me. Of course, if I am successful in this latest venture, I shall triple your commission. So take life easy, my dear Samuel, read the Almanac, and trust everything to yours truly,

PLEBANSKI."

On Friday afternoon the count called upon Miss Witwer, and made a decidedly good impression upon all the

ladies whom he met there. He talked of Washington society in a manner that left no doubt that he was a frequenter of the best houses, speaking of the highest dignitaries in a matter-of-course manner, as though association with the great were a hackneyed experience with him.

Winnie Massinger, daughter of a captain in the navy, whispered that he was "perfectly charming," a judgment in which all concurred. The count managed a full teacup and a plate of chicken sandwich with the skill of a social juggler, rising and bowing, when necessary, with perfect ease and confidence. He assisted the hostess in serving the other ladies, displaying exquisite solicitude and vigilance, causing Miss Massinger to observe, *sotto voce*:

"These foreign noblemen have so much more polished manners than our American men."

"True politeness," explained Julia, flushed with pride, "arises from innate delicacy and goodness of heart." She led her distinguished guest to the subject of Poland, and he became eloquent. When he spoke of the wrongs of his beloved country, his expressive black eyes were dimmed with tears, and he begged his hearers to pardon an emotion which he hoped they would not consider unmanly.

"But will not your brave people sometime arise and throw off the foreign yoke?" inquired one of his fair listeners.

The count arose.

"Ah!" he cried, "that is the hope of every patriot soul born in that glorious but unfortunate land. The star of Poland has set, it is true, but its luster has not been dimmed by dishonor. It will rise again, a bright jewel in the constellation of nations. Hope never dies out in the patriot's breast, and the tyrant's day of reckoning is sure to come sooner or later. At the battle of Dubienka, four thousand Poles under Kosciuszko held twenty thousand Russians at bay. The valor displayed on many a heroic field has not perished in the bosoms of my countrymen. They are waiting for a leader, and a leader will arise."

As he uttered these thrilling words, Miss Witwer believed it possible that she beheld the future savior of his country at that moment standing before her. The rumor that Plebanski was the emissary of some committee sent abroad to awaken sympathy for a just cause, was given greater credence in the minds of his hearers, and the delightful, romantic mystery by which the man was surrounded, was deepened.

The count managed to remain till after the others had departed, and Miss Witwer found him the most interesting man she had ever met. He discoursed now on the subject of Polish literature, speaking familiarly of many names which Julia had never before heard until that moment, and enthusing over them, as though they were the equals of Shakespeare or Goethe. He recited for her several love songs in his native tongue. His voice was peculiarly adapted for the interpretation of love poetry, and it was on this occasion that Julia noticed what lovely and sympathetic eyes he had. The Polish, as rendered by him, seemed one of the most musical languages in the world. He even sang, in a thrilling bass, two or three ditties, giving their equivalent in English prose.

"Would you like," he asked, "to hear a little Polish lullaby, or do I weary you?"

"Weary me? Oh, how can you ask it? Please sing some more—anything you like! I should especially love to hear some lullabies."

"If I bore you," he stipulated, seating himself again at the piano, "you must not be afraid to tell me. When I get to talking of my beloved country, with so sympathetic and intelligent a listener, I am likely never to stop. Oh, you cannot understand how great encouragement and comfort I get from the fellowship of such a royal heart as yours! Could I enlist the aid of the noble women of the world, the liberty of my dear country would be a thing assured."

The lullaby was a beautiful thing, one of those simple, tender airs, that sing themselves out of the mother heart, and when Plebanski turned and told its

meaning, his voice was broken and tremulous with emotion. Julia did not look at him out of delicacy, as she was sure there were tears in his large, expressive eyes.

"Will you pardon this emotion?" he asked, tenderly; "when I sing that song I seem to hear again the voice of my dead mother, as she sat there in the children's room of our old castle in Volhynia. I can look from the window again, and see the sluggish Pripet, along whose green banks I played as a happy boy. My mother is dead long ago, my ancestral halls have passed into the hands of strangers, and I am a wanderer in a strange land!"

After this, everywhere that Julia went, she was sure to meet the melancholy count. Indeed, it was quite easy for him to throw himself in her way, as he was a *protégé* of Ethel Payne Wheeler, who had steadily forced her way upward through the various strata of which social Washington is composed, lying one above the other, as do the seven cities upon the site of classic Troy. She had now very nearly reached the top layer, or the diplomatic set, the ultimate goal of every social aspirant in Washington; she was not on calling terms with ministers' and ambassadors' wives as yet, but she had bagged a few *attachés*, and a secretary or two. Miss Witwer and Mrs. Wheeler moved in the same circle. Mrs. Wheeler was a large woman, with luxuriant brown hair, rich coloring, teeth that she liked to show, and a general air of redundant vitality. She went in for golf, horse-back riding, and out-of-door sports in general. Her social ambition was her only folly, and a favorite expression of hers was, "It's not common sense." She had married Wheeler, partly because she respected him, and partly because he was rich.

"I hope you are not getting too deeply interested in the count, Julia," she said, one evening, to Miss Witwer. "You know you are my very best friend, and I would never have taken him up, if I had thought it possible——"

"Do you know anything against him?" asked Julia, stiffening at once.

"I took for granted, since you introduced him, that he was a gentleman."

"And so, no doubt, he is. He certainly has exquisite manners, and no one disputes that he is a count. Socially, he's a great acquisition, a prize, in fact. It would make no difference to me, if I suspected he were a barber, provided everybody else thought him a count. And doesn't he look the part, though? He certainly is conscientious in the matter of giving value received. He couldn't do better if he were an emperor. But, as for taking him seriously, it isn't common sense. When you marry, Julia, dear, let it be one of your own countrymen. They are the only genuine material out of which good husbands are made."

Julia blushed furiously.

"I am never going to marry," she replied. "You know that I am cut out for a bachelor girl."

"Nonsense," laughed Mrs. Wheeler, "not with that kind heart. When the right man comes along, and says he'll die if you don't take him, you'll take him to save his life."

"Ethel, don't be silly!"

"All right, then, I'll talk common sense. Don't, for Heaven's sake, Julia, let some designing, showy man, who isn't worth that"—here she snapped finger and thumb—"marry you for your money. You've got enough to tempt a fortune hunter, and you're too much of a prize yourself to be married for any other reason than your own sweet self."

Julia was conscious that her friend meant well, and that this advice was inspired by a genuine, loving interest. She could not be angry, therefore, yet she felt uncomfortable, because she knew, of course, that these remarks were aimed at the count; the count, that noble patriot and tender-hearted man, who wept when he spoke of his mother, and whose loneliness in a strange land touched her so deeply. Loyalty to her friends was one of Julia's chief virtues, so she took leave of Mrs. Wheeler as quickly as possible, making a desperate effort not to show her pique as she said good-by. Her manner was exaggerated and unnatural, and betrayed her.

"What have I done?" mused Mrs. Wheeler. "I thought Julia possessed of more common sense than that! Can't she see that the man is all on the outside? Instinct tells me that. I must head this off, some way or other—yet I fear that things have gone too far already. My dear, little Julia would be wretched all her life."

The next time that the count called upon Julia she was just coming down her front steps, looking really pretty in her seal coat and winter hat, trimmed with fur. She carried a small basket upon her arm.

"Ah!" he cried, "you are just going out! I am desolated, as the French say. But, perhaps, you will permit me to walk a portion of the way with you?"

"With pleasure," she replied, smiling brightly. "I would go back into the house with you, if I possibly could, but I just simply can't."

"Oh, my dear young lady," expostulated the count, bowing, "don't even think of changing your plans for me. I can do myself the honor of calling another day. But I have not offered to carry your basket"—reaching for it.

"Why, the very idea!" laughed Julia. "To think of a nobleman carrying a basket through the streets!"

But the count did not smile. He bowed again, and seized the basket with gentle determination, remarking:

"Surely, a nobleman can do anything that a gentlewoman is not ashamed to do." And a moment later he observed, tentatively: "But the basket is not empty. I thought perhaps you were going to the market? I have been told that the first ladies here do their own marketing."

"I am going to visit my poor," replied the girl. "There are some goodies in the basket for the dearest old lady, who is sick."

They walked for some time in silence. When the count spoke again, it was in a reproachful tone, not unmixed with sorrow.

"How little you know me," he murmured. "I deem it the crowning honor of my life that I should be deemed worthy to carry the basket of a minis-

tering angel—of a saint—upon her errand of mercy! If there is anything in my foolish title that should cause you to think that I do not appreciate this honor, I would cast it from me and never allow myself to be called 'count' again!"

"Forgive me!" cried Julia, with quick delicacy. "I spoke but lightly. I did not mean to imply that you—that you—would have any false or foolish pride. I did have an idea, though," she added, honestly, "that foreign customs were somewhat different from ours. Indeed, it is not quite the thing for an American lady to be carrying a basket through the streets, but I just can't go to visit the poor in a carriage, nor with a servant. When I see how dreadfully poor they are, I feel as though both my carriage and my servant were a reproach to me, as though I ought to sell everything I have and give to them. The little that I do seems such hypocrisy, in the presence of the world's awful suffering!"

"If the world contained more such angels of light as you," replied the count, "there would be no suffering."

"There are plenty of better women than I, and yet people freeze and starve to death, just the same. But I am going to make amends to you. Since I spoke so heedlessly about the basket, I am going to let you come the rounds with me this afternoon, and then I shall take you home, and give you a cup of tea—that is, if you have no other engagement."

"If I have another engagement? How could I have? At any rate, if I had a dozen engagements, I should forget them all, to profit by your goodness, and to spend an afternoon in your charming society."

Beside the sick old lady, there were about half a dozen families on Julia's list, whom she assisted or cheered, as the circumstances seemed to demand—either giving small sums of money, or promising to send coal or other supplies. In two instances, Julia became responsible for a doctor and necessary medicines.

"I did not know there were two such

good women in the world," murmured the count, fixing his large, black eyes earnestly upon Julia's face, "as my revered mother and yourself." They were sitting alone in the drawing-room, waiting for tea to be brought up. "You cannot imagine how vividly this experience of to-day brings back my boyhood years to me. There was a little village upon our estate, and often have I accompanied my mother upon her errands of mercy. She was hailed wherever she went as an angel of mercy. Our peasants revered her." His voice was exceedingly low and tender as he spoke of his mother. The appeal to Julia was well-nigh irresistible, and the homage paid her by classing her, alone of women, with that sainted lady, was not lost upon the American girl. The nobility of the count's sentiments appealed to her with peculiar force. Later he sang another love song, and translated it to her with so much earnestness that she felt he was using the words of the poet to express the feelings of his own heart. She became strangely agitated.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, in a voice of agony, as though his pent up feelings were suddenly bursting their barrier of restraint, "would to God that you were a poor girl, that I might aspire to your hand and pour out freely the great love that I feel! Miss Witwer—Julia—the exquisite charm of your presence, the nobility of your soul, have taken my heart captive." Dropping upon his knees, "Forgive me," he pleaded, "but I can no longer conceal my sentiments toward you. I have nothing to offer you, except an ancient and unsullied name, which I know means little to you, but if, some time, somehow, I could give proof of that worth to which alone your noble mind could respond, might I hope that you would look upon my suit with favor? Do not, I implore you, do not tell me that there would be no hope for me in any case. I would give you the devotion of a whole life. Oh, I could work as a menial for such a woman as you, till my fingers bled!"

"Don't! don't!" pleaded Julia. "Don't kneel to me, I beg of you. I am not

worthy of it. Do you think," she asked, reproachfully, after he had arisen and stood with bowed head before her, "that if I loved a man, the fact that he was poor, and I rich, would make any difference to me? People who love each other in a high, noble way, do not think of such things at all."

The count left the house with Julia's promise that she would search her heart with regard to her feelings toward him, and would consult with her mother. She assured him solemnly and bravely that he was not at all distasteful to her, and that, in any case, she should always regard him as one of the noblest and best of men.

The next morning she received an impassioned letter from him, eloquently depicting his utter desolation and lifelong loneliness if her heart should decide against him. He could not believe it possible that one so tender-hearted could bring herself to inflict the suffering which he described. Near the end of the last sheet were two large, round spots, for which the writer begged pardon.

"Behold," he said, "where two of my tears have dropped upon the sheet. Do not think them unmanly tears, but rather receive them as a tribute from the heart of a man who could dare anything for you, but who, without you, would become a mere weak purposeless wretch, a soul, without joy or hope in life!"

That afternoon, Mrs. Wheeler called upon Julia, and, in the course of conversation, spoke rather flippantly of the count. Julia replied with such spirit that Mrs. Wheeler gave her another lecture on the subject of common sense and fortune hunters. Whereupon Julia arose, and, with heaving bosom and flashing eyes, warned Mrs. Wheeler not to speak thus again of the noblest of men.

"If you do," she added, "you can no longer consider yourself a friend of mine."

After Mrs. Wheeler left, Julia's indignation augmented to such an extent that she wrote and canceled a dinner engagement at her friend's house.

Then Julia confided in her mother, and showed her the count's letter.

"Do you believe," she asked, "that a man could write such a letter as that and not be sincere?" To her surprise, she found the dear old lady quite as suspicious of foreigners as Mrs. Wheeler.

"Do you love him, daughter?" she asked.

"I don't know, mother dear," replied Julia, speaking softly. "I am greatly touched by his devotion, and the nobility of his character appeals to me. Moreover, I sympathize with his loneliness and his grief over his country's wrongs. I am not quite sure whether I love him or not. I—I think I am very near to loving him, mamma."

The old lady called upon Dr. Alvin Corbett, the family physician for thirty years, and asked his advice. The irascible old gentleman snorted with indignation.

"The girl is a fool," he roared; "she has fallen into the hands of an adventurer. We must save her if we have to shut her up in a lunatic asylum." Then he slapped his knee, and leaped to his feet. "By gad," he cried, "I have it! Can you get hold of that letter? Steal it if necessary. Anything is fair, so we keep the little fool from ruining her entire life."

The mother returned home, and begged the letter of Julia, that she might study it carefully, to decide whether it "rang true, or not." Julia produced it with confidence, and her mother hastened back to the doctor with it, who snipped out a tiny piece containing a tear, and returned the rest.

"Observe," he said, "that I have not read the trash."

The next morning Julia received a visit from old Dr. Corbett, who asked permission to talk with her alone, as a father.

"My dear child," he said, tenderly, laying his hand upon her wrist. "I have been the friend, and physician, and confidant, of your family for a lifetime now. I was your father's bosom friend. I helped bring you into the world, and I have dandled you upon my knee as a baby. You never had a Christmas tree

that I didn't bring as many gifts as I gave to my own children. I love you as I do my own flesh and blood. You don't doubt my affection for you, do you?"

"No, dear doctor," replied Julia, moved to tears.

"Well, your mother tells me that you are listening to the advances of a man who calls himself a Polish count—a showy foreigner——"

"Doctor, I will not hear anything, even from you, derogatory to Count Plebanski!"

"Tut! Tut! my dear. I am not going to say anything against him. I know nothing of him—as little as you do yourself. But in such an important matter, involving your entire life's happiness, you ought to have all the light possible before making your decision. Your mother and I plead our disinterested love for you as excuse for the little liberty which we have taken. See, here is a bit of paper snipped from the letter which the count wrote you. I have analyzed this circular stain, and find it to be *aqua pura*. It cannot by any possibility be a tear. The great amount of salt consumed by human beings in their food"—here the doctor, who had been for years a lecturer in a medical college, assumed a didactic air—"causes the tissues of the human body, the blood and the tears, to be saturated with salt. But there are other substances in the human tear, the presence of which is actually necessary. In fact, the exact composition of the secretion of

the *glans lachrymarum* is as follows"—producing a bit of paper from his vest pocket, adjusting his glasses, and reading:

Water.....	98.1
Organic { Albumin	} ..... 1.46
{ Mucin	
{ Epithelium	} ..... .8
Salts (especially NaCl).....	

"If you have not sufficient confidence in my skill, or—or—honesty, you may submit the other to any chemist in the country. It is *aqua pura*, my dear, and unless the count weeps differently from all other mortals in the world, never came from his eyes."

Julia indignantly snatched the tiny fragment of the letter and left the room. She was a trifle pale when she appeared the next day, but she did not mention the count. She had already written a note to Mrs. Wheeler, informing her that she had changed her mind, and would be present at the dinner party.

A few days later, the count wrote at length to Mr. Samuel Wolfsohn. Among other things, he said:

"I have concluded, after all, to consult my own feelings to a certain extent and marry the widow, who still remains true, despite my excursion into foreign waters. I hope that you will agree with me that her fortune is ample, so far as your own profits on the money invested are concerned. As for me, I have grown sentimental all at once, and believe that I shall be happier with a brilliant and beautiful woman of the world, than with an ugly little fool, however wealthy."



## LOVE'S AWAKENING

MY eyes were wet with tears,  
I scarce knew why,  
Except I saw you going, and the sky  
Changed suddenly from blue to gray,  
And far away  
The hills that had been flushed with sunset gold  
Loomed grim and cold.

MADELEINE WINDEYER.



# THE GIFT OF THE SEA

By Lucia Chamberlain

A WOMAN sat by her doorstone, carding wool.

Before her eyes stretched the glittering sea. By turning her head, she could keep watch on her two children, at play along the bank of a swift river that flowed past the foot of the hill to the ocean.

Presently came two bent, old women by the door where she sat, and asked for a drink of water. The housemother bade them be seated and rest themselves, and fetched out a jug of milk and some black bread. All the while they were eating she could never leave off staring at them, for they were the very strangest folk she had ever seen. They were withered and brown, and sere as leaves in autumn, so that the eyes in their faces were all about them that seemed alive, and these were like the sea on a calm day when the sun strikes it.

While the women sat talking together by the doorstone, there came a scream from the river. The children, playing too near the water, had fallen in, and the flood was sweeping them fast to the sea. They cried and stretched out their little arms. The mother ran down to the brink like one mad, and would have sprung in after them, but a neighbor held her back. The waters swallowed her children before her very eyes. And when she saw them gone she gave a great, bitter cry and fell upon the ground.

By this time all the people of the fishing village were gathered on the bank, and what should they see but two strange women, brown and sere as the leaves in autumn, come down from the house on the hill. Brown and sere they were when they began the descent, but

as they moved they changed. Taller they grew and whiter, with hair like floating seaweed and garments dripping water. They drifted like the sea fog, they ran over the ground like the waves, they flowed over the bank, they melted into the river. And while all stood dumb—amazed and aghast—these two strange women arose again out of the flood, bearing in their arms the lost children, alive, as though they had never been beneath the waves.

"This, because you were kind to us," said the tallest, fairest of the two, holding out the little ones to the weeping mother.

When she saw them thus restored to her, the woman gave a great, glad cry, and caught her children in her arms. But they struggled from her caresses and ran away, up the river bank, crying to each other: "What new game shall we play now?" And the mother followed, praying them to return to her. Then the strangers looked sadly at one another.

But when the people of the village saw the dead thus brought back from the sea, a clamor arose, every man and woman crying out: "Bring me back my dead!" "My boy!" "My husband!" "My father!" "My wife!" "Bring back my beloved whom the sea hath taken!"

Then the two sea women began to weep, and the tallest, fairest spoke, with a voice low and sweet as the waves lapping the sand.

"Yes, that thing can we do for you; but consider well before you ask it. Blessed are the dead whom the sea hath taken, for their souls rejoice in Paradise and their dear memories live in

your hearts forever. If they return they will be as though the sea had never sundered you—they will forget their death. They will know not of your sorrowful hearts, your ceaseless prayers. Look at that mother whose children were restored to her. They will not heed her; her tears are falling. Will not other than God hath willed, or sorrow shall shadow your hearthstone! Blessed are the dead whom the sea hath taken!"

But the people cried out with one voice: "No, no! Of all this we will nothing! The sea hath cheated us, now we would cheat the sea. Bring back our beloved ones! Bring us back our drowned!"

Then the sea women rose up tall out of the water, pointing long arms toward the village.

"Return, return, and find them!" they cried, and their voices were shrill as the wind piping in the rigging.

With one accord the throng turned and hurried breathlessly back to their

homes. And lo! it was even as the strangers had said, and all through the village was the mingled sound of laughter and weeping.

But they that had returned from the dead knew neither joy nor sorrow. The children played and quarreled in the streets, impatient of their parents' caresses; the husband broke from his wife's embrace and went forth to mend his nets; the son, blind to his mother's tears, hastened to the tavern. The grandfather in his old place in the chimney corner moaned and groaned, complaining alike of good and ill; and the people looked at each other in sore, sad amazement, and the shadow of sorrow lay over all the hearthstones.

But the two sea women, twining their long arms about one another, riding the swift current of the river to the sea, lifted their voices in a song, the echo of which became a whisper in the hearts of those sorrowful fisher folk.

"Blessed are the dead whom the sea hath taken!"



## DR. POLNITZSKI

By Arlo Bates

"SO you think," Dr. Polnitzski said, smiling rather satirically, "that you are really tasting the bitterness of life?"

"I didn't say anything of the sort," I retorted, impatiently. "I wasn't making anything so serious of it; but you'll own that to be thrown over your horse's head on a stake that rips a gash six inches long in your thigh isn't precisely amusing."

"Oh, quite the contrary," he answered. "I'm prepared to admit so much."

"In the very middle of the hunting

season, too," I went on, "and at the house of a friend. More than that, a man never gets over the feeling that everybody secretly thinks an accident must be his own fault and he a duffer. Even Lord Eldon, who's good nature itself and no end of a jolly host, must think——"

"Nonsense," my physician interrupted brusquely, "Lord Eldon is not a fool, and he realizes that this wasn't your fault as well as you do yourself. You take the whole thing so hard because you've evidently never come in contact with the realities of life."

He was so magnificent a man as he stood there that the brusqueness of his words was easily forgiven; he had been so unremitting in his care ever since, in the illness of Lord Eldon's family physician, he had been called in on the occasion of my accident, that I had become genuinely attached to him. Our acquaintance had ripened into something almost like intimacy since my host and his family had been unexpectedly called from home by the illness of a married daughter, and it had come to be the usual thing for Dr. Polnitzski to pass with me the evenings of my slow convalescence, which would otherwise have been so intolerably tedious.

"I dare say I've been too much babied most of my life," I returned; "but a month of this sort of thing is pretty serious for anybody."

He smiled, then his face grew grave. "I dare say you may think me tediously moral," he said, "but I can't help thinking of what I see every day. For some years I've been trying to do something for the poor people about here, and especially for the operatives over at Friezeton. If you had any idea of the things I've seen— But, after all, you wouldn't understand if I were to tell you."

"I know," I returned, "that you have devoted yourself to the most generous work among those poor wretches."

"I beg your pardon," responded he, stiffening at once, "but we will, if you please, waive compliments."

"But," I persisted, "Lord Eldon and others have more than once expressed their wonder that you, with talents and acquirements so unusual, should bury yourself—"

"I was not speaking of myself," he interrupted, somewhat impatiently, "but of my poor patients. If you knew what they suffer uncomplainingly, it might make you a little more patient."

We were both silent for a little time. I looked across the chamber at the strong figure of the Russian, as he stood by the fire, and wondered what his past had been. I knew that he was a mystery to all the neighborhood where he had lived for the better part of a

dozen years. He was evidently a gentleman, and he seemed to be wealthy. I had myself found him to be of unusual culture and refinement, and he had unobtrusively won recognition as a physician of marked skill and attainments. The wonder was why he should be living in England as an exile, and why he so persistently resisted all efforts to draw him from his retirement. He devoted himself to philanthropic work in a perfectly quiet fashion, declining to be enrolled as part of any organized charity. He was more and more, however, coming to be recognized as a skilful physician, and to be called in for consultation. He impressed me on the whole as a man who had a past, and I could not but wonder what that past had been.

"I dare say you are right," I answered, somewhat absently, "but has it never occurred to you that it is easy to make the mistake of judging the suffering of others by our own standards instead of by their real feelings? It seems to be assumed nowadays that all men are born with the same sensibilities, yet nothing could be farther from the truth."

Dr. Polnitzski did not reply for a moment. He seemed this evening to be unusually restless. He walked about the room, getting up as soon as he sat down, and made impulsive movements which apparently betrayed some inward disturbance.

"Of course you are right," he said, at length, in an absent manner. "The classes not bred to sensitiveness cannot have the real sensibility—"

He broke off abruptly and came across to my couch.

"We were talking," he began, with a sudden, bitter vehemence which startled me, "of real suffering. See! I have lived here silent in an alien land for long years; but to-day—to-day is an anniversary, and I have somehow lost the power to be silent any longer. If you care to listen, I will tell you what I mean by suffering; I will tell you what life has been to me."

"If you will," I responded, "I will try to understand."

He seemed hardly to hear or to heed my words, but, walking up and down the chamber he began at once, speaking with the outbursting eagerness of a man that has restrained himself long.

"My father," he said, "was one of the small nobles in the neighborhood of Moscow. I was his only son, and when he died, in my seventeenth year, I had been his companion so much that I was as mature as most lads half a dozen years older. My mother was a gentle, good woman. I loved my mother, but she made little difference in my life. She was kind to me and she prayed for me a good deal. She thought her prayers answered when I grew up without debauchery. She may have been right; but I have lived to think that there are worse things than debauchery."

He paused a moment, and then went on, looking downward.

"Once the little mother was frightened," he went on again, with a strange mingling of bitterness and tenderness in his tone. "There was a girl, the daughter of the steward; her name was Alexandrina."

His voice as he pronounced the stately name was full of feeling. He seemed to have forgotten me, and to be telling his story to an unseen hearer.

"Shurochka," he said, dwelling on the diminutive with a fond, lingering cadence most pathetic to hear, "Shurochka! I loved her; I was mad for her; my blood was full of longing by day and of fire by night. It was the complete, mad passion of a boy grown into a man, and pure in spite of an ardent temperament. I used to stand under her window at night and, if it were stinging with cold or storm, I was glad. I seemed to be doing something for her; you know the madness, perhaps, in spite of the cold temperament of your race. I did not for a moment really hope for her. Her family had betrothed her to her cousin and it would have broken my mother's heart for me to marry the descendant of serfs. I couldn't even show her that I loved her. My father out of his grave said to me what he had said again and again while he was alive:

'Do not hurt those under you; and especially do not soil the purity of a maiden.' I did not try to conceal from the little mother that I loved Shurochka, and maybe the servants gossiped, as they always do, but Shurochka herself I avoided. I was not sure that I could trust myself to see her. It was a happiness to the little mother when the girl was married and taken away to the home of her cousin in Moscow. She felt safe for me then, and she was very tender. Time, she said, would take this madness out of my heart."

He looked into the glowing fire with a strange expression and mused a little.

"My good mother!" he said again. "She was too near a saint to understand. That has been a madness time couldn't take out of my heart! I've gone out here on the moors and flung myself down on the ground and bitten the turf in agony because it seemed to me that I had borne this as long as human endurance was possible! No; if the spirit of the little mother sees me, she knows that time has not taken the madness out of me!"

His face had grown white with feeling and he seemed to struggle to control himself.

"I can't tell you whether it was wholly from the loss of her and the death of my mother which came soon after, or whether it was the current of the time, the unrest in the air, that drew me toward the men who were striving to free Russia from political slavery. I went to St. Petersburg to continue my studies, and there I was thrown with men aflame with the ardor of patriotism. Constantly the cause of Holy Russia secretly took more and more absolute possession of me. I confided it to nobody. I did not even suspect that anybody had the smallest hint of my state of mind, and yet, when the time came, when I had made my decision to throw in my lot with the patriots, I found them not only ready, but expecting me. They had felt my secret comradeship by that sixth sense which we develop in Russia in our zeal for country, and the imperative need of such an intelligence in the work we have to do.

"I didn't take the step from simple patriotism, perhaps. Motives are generally mixed in this world. There was a last touch, a final reason in my case as in others that had a good deal of the personal. I was ripe for the cause, but there was a gust to shake the fruit down. There came bitter news from Moscow."

Again he paused, but only for a second; then threw back his head and went on with a new hardness in his tone more moving than open fierceness.

"Shurochka was gone. It was whispered that a noble high in the army had carried her off, but no one dared to speak openly. We must be careful how we complain in Holy Russia. When her husband tried to find her, when he tormented the police to right him, he was arrested as a political offender—the charge always serves. The man, as I afterward learned authoritatively, was no more a conspirator than you are. He was sent to the mines of Siberia simply because he complained that his wife had been stolen, and so made himself obnoxious to a man in power. It was fortunate for me that I did not learn the officer's name, or I should have gone to Siberia, too."

Dr. Polnitski threw himself into a chair by the fire and remained staring into the coals as if he had forgotten me, and as if he again were back in the dreadful days of which he had spoken. I waited some time before I spoke and then, without daring to offer sympathy, I asked if he were willing to go on with his story. He looked at me as if he saw me through a dream; then he came to sit down beside my couch.

"Pardon me," he said. "I was a fool to allow myself to speak, but now you may have the whole of it. It isn't worth while for me to tell you my experiences as a patriot—a Nihilist, you would say. I was full of zeal; I was young and hot-headed; I thought that all the strength of my feeling was turned to my country. I know now that a good deal of it was consumed in the desire for revenge upon that unknown officer. Russia, our Holy Russia, I said to myself, must be to me both wife and child. Stepniak said to me once that Russia was the only coun-

try in the world where it was a man's duty not to obey the laws. You cannot understand it here in England, where it never occurs to you to fear, as you lie down at night, that for no fault whatever, you may in the morning find yourself on the way to lifelong exile and some horrible, living death. I could tell you things that I can hardly think of without going mad; they are the events of every day in our unhappy land. The heroism, the devotion of those striving to free Russia can be believed only by the few that know they are true. They are beyond human; they are divine. Why, the things I have known done by women so pure and delicate that they were almost angels already—"

He broke off and wiped his forehead.

"I beg your pardon," said he, in a tone he evidently tried to make more natural. "I will not talk of this. I have not spoken so for years and I cannot command myself. It is enough for you to know that I saw it all, and that, to the best of my ability, I did my part. As time went on, I established myself as a physician at St. Petersburg. My family connection, although I had no near relatives, was of use to me and in the end I had an excellent position. I was fortunate in the curing of wounds, and I had the luck to attract attention by saving the life of a near relative of the Czar. All this I looked at as so much work done for the cause. Every advance I made in influence, in wealth, in power, put me in a position to be so much the more serviceable to the great purpose of my life. Personal ambition was so swallowed up in the tremendousness of that issue that self was lost sight of. The patriot cannot remember himself in a land like Russia."

"When the execution—" He paused and turned to me with a singular smile. "You would say the assassination—when the death of General Karkozoff was determined in our Section, no part was assigned to me, but I was high enough in the councils of the patriots to know all that was done. He had possession of information which it was necessary to suppress. He came to St. Petersburg to present it in person.

He told me frankly enough afterward that he would not trust any one, because he counted upon a reward for giving the evidence himself. We were minutely informed of his plans and his movements. We had taken the precaution to replace his body-servant by one of our own men as soon as he began to make inquiries about two patriots who were suspected by the government. He had proofs which would have been fatal to them, and it was necessary to intercept these. If he had been put out of the way our agent would easily have got possession of the papers, and without the testimony of the general our two friends were safe. The plot failed through one of those chances that make men believe in the supernatural. He was shot as he stepped out of the train at the St. Petersburg station, but the very instant our man fired, Kakonzoff stumbled. The bullet, which should have gone through his heart, passed through his lungs without killing him."

The perfectly cool manner in which Dr. Polnitzski spoke of this incident affected me like a vertigo. To have a man who is one's daily companion, and of whom one has become fond, speak of an assassination as if it were an ordinary occurrence, is almost like seeing him concerned himself in a murder. I lay there listening to the doctor with a fascination not unmixed with horror, despite the fact that my sympathies, as he knew beforehand, were strongly with the Nihilists. To be in sympathy with their cause and to come so near as to smell the reek of blood, so to speak, were, however, very different things.

"By a strange chance," the doctor went on, "I was summoned to attend the wounded man, and although it was a desperate fight, I was after some days satisfied that I could save his life."

"But," I interrupted, "I don't see why you should try to save his life if you were of those who doomed him to death in the first place."

He looked at me piercingly.

"You forget," he answered, "that I was called to him as a physician. It is the duty of a physician to save life, as it may be the duty of a patriot to take

it. I was trying to do my best in both capacities. I had given the best council I could in the Section and, when he was on his feet, I would have shot him myself if it had seemed to my superiors that I was the best person to do it. Does it seem to you that I could have taken advantage of his helplessness, of his confidence, of my skill as a physician to deprive him of the life which it is the aim of a physician's existence to preserve?"

He waited for me to reply, but I had no answer to give him. The situation was one so far outside of my experience, so fantastically unreal as measured by my own life, that I could not even judge of it.

"See," he went on, leaning forward with shining eyes and with increasing excitement of manner, "the patient puts himself into the hands of his physician, body and soul. To betray that trust is to strike at the very heart of the whole sacred art of healing. If I, as a physician, took advantage of this sick man I not only betrayed the personal trust he put in me, but I was false to the whole principle on which the relation of doctor and patient rests. Don't you see what a tremendous question is involved? That to harm Kakonzoff was to go beyond the limits of human possibility?"

"Yes," was my answer; "I can understand how a doctor might feel that; but I don't know how far the feeling of a patriot might overbalance this; how far the idea of serving his country would overcome every other feeling."

Polnitzski gave me a glance which made me quiver.

"It is a question which I found I did not readily answer," he said, "when I received from the chief of our Section an order not to let Kakonzoff recover."

He sprang up from his chair and began to pace the floor.

"What could I do?" he said, pouring out his words with a rapidity which increased his slight foreign accent so that when his face was turned away I could hardly follow them. "There was my country bleeding her very heart's blood. Every day the most infamous cruelties were done before my eyes. And if this man Kakonzoff lived to tell his story it



meant the torture, the death of men whose only crime was that they had given up everything that makes life tolerable to save their fellows from political slavery. It lay in my power to let Kakonzoff die. A very slight neglect would accomplish that. To the cause of my country I had sworn the most solemn oaths, and sworn them with my whole heart. I had never before even questioned any order from the Section. I had obeyed with the blind fidelity of a man that loved the cause too well to think of his own will at all. But now—now, I simply found what I was asked to do was impossible! I could not do it. I fought it out with myself day and night and all the time the patient was slowly getting better. The gain was slow, but it was steady, and I could not fail to see that his giving his wicked testimony against the patriots was simply a matter of time.

"But one day, through no fault of mine—indeed, because my express orders had been disobeyed—he became worse. I can't tell you the relief I felt in thinking the man might die and I be spared the awful necessity of deciding. If he would only die without fault of mine—but I still did my best. I gave minute directions, and when I left him I promised to return in a few hours. As I went through the antechamber on my way out of the hotel, some one came behind me quickly and laid a hand on my arm. I thought it was the nurse, following to ask some question. I turned round to be face to face with Shurochka! My God! It was like a crazy farce or a bad dream!"

It is impossible that Dr. Polnitzski should not have known what an effect his story was producing on me, and it is hardly doubtful that his responsive Slav nature was more or less moved by my excitement. He seemed, however, scarcely to be conscious of me at all. His face was white with suffering and he spoke with the vehemence of one who tries to be rid of intolerable pain by pouring it out in words.

"In a flash," he went on, "it came over me what her presence meant and I said to myself, 'I will kill him!' I had

always hoped that in striking against the creatures of the Czar's tyranny I might unknowingly reach the man that had harmed her; but I had wished not to know, for I could not bear that personal feeling should come into the work I did for my country. That work was the one sacred thing. Now what I had feared had been thrust on me. Shurochka was changed; there were marks of suffering in her face and she showed, too, the effects of training which could never have come honestly into the life of a woman of her station. She was dressed like a lady. At first she did not know me. She spoke to me as a stranger, and implored me to save Kakonzoff. She caught me by the arm in her excitement; and then she recognized me. Then—oh, my God, what creatures women are!—then she cried out that I had loved her once and that in memory of that time I must help her. Think of it! She flung my broken heart in my face to induce me to save the scoundrel she loved!

"It was Alexandrina, my old-time Shurochka, clinging to me as if she had risen from the grave where her shame should have been hidden, and I loved her then and always. I could hardly control myself to speak to her. All I could do was stupidly to ask if he was kind to her, and she shrank as if I had lashed her with the knout. She cried out that it was no matter, so long as she loved him, and that I must save him; that she could not live without him. I—I couldn't endure it! I shook off her hands and rushed away more wild than sane, with her voice in my ears all agony and despair."

His face was dreadful in its pain, and I felt that I had no right to see it. I closed my eyes, and tried to turn away a little, but in my clumsiness I knocked from the couch a book. The crash of its fall aroused him. He mechanically picked up the volume and the act seemed somewhat to restore him to himself.

"You may judge," he began again, "the hell that I was in. I could have torn the man to bits and yet—and yet now I said to myself that to obey the Section and let Kakonzoff die would be

doing a murder to gratify personal hate. Yet all the sides of the question tortured me. I asked the valet in the afternoon about the woman that had spoken to me. He shrugged his shoulders and said she was only a peasant that the general was tired of, but that she would not leave him, although he beat her. He beat her!"

There were tears in my eyes at the intensity with which he spoke, but Dr. Polnitzski's were dry. He clinched his strong hands as if he were crushing something. Then he shook himself as if he were awaking, and threw back his head with a bitter attempt at a laugh.

"Bah!" he exclaimed, with a shrug. "I have never talked like this in my life, but it is so many years since I talked at all that I have lost control of myself. I beg your pardon."

He crossed the room, sat down by the fire and began to fill his pipe.

"But, Dr. Polnitzski," I protested eagerly, "I do not want to force your confidence, but you cannot stop such a story there."

He looked at me a moment as if he would not go on. Then his face darkened.

"What could the end of such a story be?" he demanded. "Any end must be ruin and agony. Should I be moved by personal feelings to be false to every-

thing I held sacred? Should I take my revenge at the price of professional honor? I said to myself that in time she might come to care for me if this man were out of her life. Kindness could do so much with some women. But could I make such a choice?"

"No," I said, slowly, "you could not do that."

"Could I restore him to life, then, and have him go on beating that poor girl and flinging her into the ditch at last?"

I had no answer.

"Could I let him live to destroy the patriots whose sworn fellow I was? Do you think I could ever sleep again without dreaming of their fate? Could I kill him there in his bed—I, the physician he trusted? Could I do that?"

"In God's name," I cried, "what did you do?"

He regarded me with a look that challenged my very deepest thought.

"The patriots were spared," he answered. "That was my fee for saving the life of General Kakonzoff. A year later I paid for having asked that favor by being exiled myself."

"And—and—the other?" I asked.

"She, thank God, is dead."

We were both silent for a time and then I said, holding out my hand to him as he stood by the fire:

"Do you mind shaking hands?"



## THE GREAT STRANGE GLORY

GAZEST where, over hill and sea,  
The Great Strange Glory lies?  
Wherefore? How shall it profit thee,  
Seen only with thine eyes?

The wonder is forever wrought,  
The morning anthem sung;  
But it must be within thy thought,  
Must dwell upon thy tongue.

JOHN VANCE CHENEY.

# THE PERILS AND PITFALLS

By Joseph C. Lincoln

## I.

THE morning train from the Cape roared into the great South Station at Boston, and the passengers crowded out upon the platforms.

There were drummers and business men, storekeepers coming to buy goods, matrons and country maidens on shopping trips, clerks back from vacations, and summer girls and summer boarders galore.

Also, there was Deacon Darius Bachelder, envoy extraordinary of the East Harniss Baptist Society, with the congregation's fund in his pocket and the congregation's trust embodied in his person, coming to town upon an errand of importance and realizing its importance to the fullest degree.

When the committee chose the deacon as the one person fitted by nature and occupation to go to Boston and buy the books and bookcase, the congregation unanimously approved the choice.

The books and bookcase aforementioned were to be presented by the faithful of the Baptist church to the Rev. Mr. Whyte, pastor of that little society, and his wife as tokens of love and esteem.

The occasion of their presentation was the tenth anniversary of the Rev. Whyte's call to the pastorate—a great event. The gift, too, was to be an elaborate one—forty-two dollars and thirty-eight cents having been subscribed—and it was plain that the time demanded a great man. Obviously, Deacon Bachelder was the man of the hour.

The deacon was the only literary character, Parson Whyte excepted,

among the two hundred and fourteen inhabitants of East Harniss. He boasted a library of thirty-seven volumes in which Plutarch's Lives and a dilapidated edition of the Waverly novels occupied positions of honor, and he passed generally for a man of parts and learning. Then, too, he was the local representative of the Cape Cod *Item*, and his lines written for that journal upon the occasion of the death of Captain Obed Pepper were still quoted by the relatives of the deceased. They began, "He sailed serene the seas of life; his keel ne'er struck the shoals of sin," and were originally in twenty-one stanzas, of which the jealous editor suppressed eighteen.

Add to these qualifications the facts that he boasted of never having tasted a drop of liquor in his life, that he never read the Boston papers because they contained the advertisements of brewers and distillers, and that his talks in prayer meetings mainly consisted of tirades against the perils and pitfalls of the great cities, and the peculiar fitness of the deacon for his new position will be at once apparent. It may be added that Mr. Bachelder's present trip to the Massachusetts capital was his first in twelve years.

He followed the crowd through the mammoth station and passed out at the main entrance. The elevated railway was a new thing to him and he stopped to stare upward at it. The hurrying crowds and the tall buildings made him feel peculiarly strange and out of place, and for the first time the sense of his own importance, that had caused him to patronize the East Harniss friends who had "seen him off," deserted him.

The deacon looked a little bewildered and worried.

Perhaps this look was what caused the young man in the red-checked waistcoat and pink tie to come over and speak to him. The young man had been watching Mr. Bachelder ever since the latter left the train and had followed him out of the station. Now he rushed across the sidewalk and held out his hand.

"Well! well!" he explained, "who'd have thought of seein' you in these diggin's! How's things down on the Cape?"

The smile of the young man was so fascinating and the tones of his voice so sweetly smooth that the deacon was charmed at once. Incidentally, the stranger was dressed just as Darius had felt sure rich city men would dress. He took the proffered hand.

"Why, you've kinder got the best of my mem'ry," he said, "yer face seems sorter familiar, but somehow I fergit yer name, Mister—Mister—"

"Montgomery, Charlie Montgomery. I met you at Yarmouth one summer. You took me'n' the girl out ridin'. I knew you in a minute. Why, say, Mr. Black, I—"

The deacon actually grinned. These city people weren't so sharp after all.

"Guess yer've got the wrong pig by the ear," he interrupted, "my name ain't Black, and I don't live in Yarmouth. I'm from East Harniss. Name's Bachelder."

It was actually pitiable to see the humiliation and distress of young Mr. Montgomery. He apologized so profusely for his mistake that Darius felt called upon to help him out of his trouble. He explained that there was no harm done, and that he was very glad to have made the acquaintance, anyway. This seemed to relieve the confused Charles, who brightened up at once and grew very communicative. He imparted so much of his personal history that the deacon reciprocated by telling the errand that had brought him to Boston.

"Books, eh?" ejaculated the delighted Mr. Montgomery. "Well, say! talk

about luck! Why, I've got a friend in the book line and he'll do anything for me. I can save you fifty per cent, on any book you want to buy. Come right along with me."

The deacon protested that he couldn't think of putting a stranger to so much trouble, but his companion waved aside all protestations and, catching him by the arm, hurried away to find the friend in the "book line." Apparently the latter's place of business was some distance off, for they had walked for half an hour, when Mr. Montgomery stopped before a shabby-looking drug store, wiped his forehead with his handkerchief, and exclaimed:

"Whew! Sufferin' cats, but it's hot! Le's go in here and have some soda."

Now soda was a drinkable against which Mr. Bachelder had no scruples, and he gladly followed his kind-hearted friend into the store. A dissipated-looking clerk arose from his seat behind the soda fountain, tossed a cigarette stub under the counter, and, after bestowing a grin and nod upon Mr. Montgomery, inquired what his patrons would have.

"Give us some sass'p'rilla, Tim," said the genial Charles. "Better take sass'p'rilla, Mr. Bachelder; nothin' like it for coolin' a guy off. Two of 'em, Tim." And Mr. Montgomery winked cheerfully yet deliberately.

There are certain drug stores, even in Boston, where a wink carries weight. The clerk drew two glasses of the sarsaparilla, retired behind the fountain for a moment, and came out again stirring the beverages with a spoon.

"Well, here's happy days!" said Mr. Montgomery, poisoning his glass. The deacon smiled benignly and the sarsaparilla disappeared. It was good soda, there was no doubt about that. A little stronger, perhaps, than Darius had been in the habit of drinking, and with a flavor that was new to him, but good, and singularly exhilarating and comforting. He felt at peace with all the world and his benign smile became positively radiant.

"My, my! that's grateful!" he exclaimed. "Beats what we git down our

way all ter nothin'. Le's have a couple more of 'em, mister. No, no!" as Mr. Montgomery reached for his money, "this is my treat."

If the deacon had noticed the intent gaze with which the companionable young Boston gentleman regarded the old-fashioned wallet that he took from his pocket he might have been alarmed. He did not notice it, however, and the drug clerk drew the sodas, retired behind the fountain and reappeared, as before. The second supply of sarsaparilla went the way of the first. Its effect upon Mr. Bachelder was even more enlivening. He insisted upon shaking hands with the grinning Tim and inviting him to visit East Harniss.

Also he endeavored to recall a humorous story he had heard some four or five years before. It was a complicated yarn, however, and before he could recollect its ending his friend had piloted him to the street. And then a queer thing happened.

A big Irish policeman suddenly appeared from around the corner and caught Mr. Montgomery, somewhat roughly, by the shoulder.

"Move right along, Reddy, me son," he said, briskly, "I've had me eye on you for the last tin minutes. Niver mind yer frind, here; he'll go the other way. You'n' me take a constitootional toards the station."

"Aw, what the devil's the matter, Maloney?" demanded the indignant young gentleman; "I ain't done nothin'."

"I know yez ain't, not yit, and that's what I'm here fer. I don't intend yer shall. And now, ould sport," turning to the dazed Mr. Bachelder, "you throt along up that strate and don't make any more friends like him, understand. Come on, Reddy, till I inthroduce yer ter the sergeant."

Still protesting, Mr. Montgomery was led away by the policeman, leaving the deacon, between the sarsaparilla and astonishment, utterly befogged. Tim, the drug clerk, rapped on the window and beckoned.

"Was he pinched?" he inquired, when the deacon entered the store.

"Who? What?"

"Him—Reddy. Did Maloney pinch him?"

"He went away with the officer, young feller," said Darius, with dignity. "Officer" was a provokingly difficult word to pronounce. "Seemed ter be a friend of his."

"Hully gee!" muttered Tim. Then he grinned maliciously and added; "Have another sass'p'rilla?"

Well, it's a sad story. The rest of that day is still a troubled blank to Deacon Darius Bachelder of the East Harniss Baptist church. He has an indistinct remembrance of encounters with several insinuating gentlemen with prominent noses who invited him to come inside certain stores and buy something to "dake home ter de old laty."

The next thing he remembers, and that, like his other memories, is somewhat shadowy, is of walking into a long room where a crowd of men were standing at a counter and apparently drinking what may or may not have been sarsaparilla. He remembers that they laughed very much when he appeared; why, he didn't at the time understand.

Then one of the men left the others and hurried over to him and looked intently in his face. The deacon remembers now that he was not greatly astonished to recognize "Al" Small.

Mr. Small had been at one time the "sport," and consequently the disgrace, of East Harniss. He then owned the only pool and billiard room in the village, and it was more than rumored that he bet on horse races, gambled occasionally, and had been known to tarry long at the wine cup. He and his habits had more than once formed the subjects of the deacon's discourse at Friday night prayer meeting. Small had eventually moved from East Harniss to Wareham, where, so the news had come to his old home, he was running a grocery store and doing well.

But, though the deacon may not have been astonished to meet Mr. Small, certain it was that Small was astonished to meet the deacon. He apparently could

not believe his eyes and looked and looked again.

"Hello, Al!" said Mr. Bachelder, solemnly.

Then Mr. Small went into a paroxysm of laughter. He laughed until he was obliged to lean against the door to recover his breath.

"Well, I'll be hanged!" he roared, "wonders'll never stop! Darius Bachelder! Darius! And I thought I was the only feller with the spunk of a man that ever lived in East Harniss! But yer can't tell. Git one of these reel old starchy chaps away from home and— Put 'er there, Darius!" he added, holding out his hand. "I'm free ter say that I never thought much of yer down on the Cape, but I see that you've always done what I've only had sense enough ter do lately; that is, be respectable where you're known and have your fun where you're a stranger. Put 'er there!"

The deacon groped around for the extended hand and shook it feebly. He endeavored to make some fitting remark, but could think of nothing but "sass'p'rilla," and so said that. Mr. Small looked him over carefully.

"My, my! but you're in a state," he muttered. "Leave you alone and you'll be picked clean and end in the station house. Old friend of mine down home," he explained to the amused crowd. "Come up ter town on his annual time. I guess it's up ter me ter look after him. Here, you, Darius," taking the deacon by the arm and leading him to the back of the room, "you come with me."

If Mr. Bachelder had been in a condition to notice things about him, he might have thought the room to which Mr. Small now conducted him a curious place. It was up one flight of stairs and there were no less than three doors across the passage, each heavy and barred and having a peephole through which the initiated "Al" conversed with some person unseen. The room itself had no windows and was lit by gas. There were tables around which crowds of men were sitting or standing, and there was a constant whirring and click-

ing sound in the air, and some one was always mentioning the name of a color, black and red being the favorites. It was also noticeable that a sharp-eyed, square-chinned man stood in the center of the room and when the conversation became at all loud he checked it with a word.

Mr. Small conducted Darius to a chair.

"There!" he said, "you set there until I'm ready to go. Don't you worry none; I'm goin' ter see yer through."

The deacon was only too willing to sit anywhere. The room was hot and the atmosphere oppressive. He fell asleep almost instantly and in a most undignified heap. Some time thereafter he was aroused by a vigorous shaking.

"Hi, you! Wake up!" exclaimed Mr. Small, who was doing the shaking. "Lend me what money you've got with yer. I'll pay yer as soon as we git ter my hotel. Where's your pocket-book?"

The dazed Darius indicated his trousers pocket. Mr. Small pulled out the wallet, and began going over its contents.

"Here's your keys," he said; "better put them safe somewheres. I'll put 'em here. Yes, and your railroad ticket—I'll stick that in here so yer'll know where 'tis. There! Set still till I come."

With the wallet in his hand he darted back to the crowd from whence came the voices calling the names of the colors. The deacon, dazed and half awake, gazed about him uncomprehendingly. He had an indistinct notion that he was in church. Suddenly and at the top of his voice he struck up a hymn.

The men at the tables turned quickly, saw from whence the noise proceeded and turned back again. Mr. Small was too excited and intent to turn at all. The sharp-eyed man in the center of the room held up his forefinger. A burly fellow came out of a corner, took the deacon by the arm, opened a side door, led him down a short flight of stairs and pushed him out into the street. Then



the burly man went back to the room again, after locking the doors.

Some time later Mr. Bogardus, who keeps the sailor's lodging house on Richmond Street, was surprised to see his friend, Patrolman Maloney, enter the office of the lodging house escorting a wretched and disreputable object. Collar awry, Sunday black coat covered with dust and torn, Sunday tall hat battered and jammed down upon the ears, it was the veritable Mr. Hyde or Deacon Darius Bachelder, of the East Harniss Baptist church.

"Bill," said Officer Maloney, "look at this, will yer? Ain't it a mortal shame? Begorra, I hadn't the heart ter run him in! And they've got every cint he had to his name, too. Here, Bill, give him a room and let him slape it off, and I'll pay the damage. Barrin' that his nose don't turn up enough on the ind, and that thim Galways of his ain't rid enough, he'd be the livin' image of me own ould grandfather over across. Thrate him tenderly, Billy, and God'll be good ter ye."

## II.

It was well into the forenoon of the next day when the deacon awoke. Awoke to find himself in a bed in a strange house. Awoke with a headache and certain dim and horrible remembrances of the day before, that became but little more distinct as he dressed himself. It was while dressing that he discovered the loss of his pocketbook.

Mr. Bogardus would have been much more stony-hearted than it was his wont to be had he not felt sincere pity for the pale and trembling creature that tottered down the stairs and across the room to his desk. The deacon was in a condition of crushed and hopeless despair.

"Will you please tell me, mister," he begged, humbly, "how I come ter be here?"

"Maloney, the cop, lugged yer in here last night," replied the lodging-house keeper. "Yer needn't worry about the price of your room. It's all paid fer."

"Was—was I sick when I come here?"

"Well, some folks might call it bein' sick. You certainly was mighty bad."

"Had—had I been drinkin' liquor?"

"Had yer been drink— Why, say, pop! You're old enough ter know better. You take my advice and go straight home. Where d'yer live?"

Alas, for pride that leadeth to destruction! The deacon choked, gulped, and gave the name of a town but little distance from Boston.

"Oh, well! that ain't so bad," said the kind-hearted Bogardus. "Here's a dollar. Take it and buy yerself a ticket and don't stop nowheres on the way ter the depot. That's all right. Yer can send me the money after yer git home."

Darius took the dollar and stammered a feeble attempt at thanks. He put aside the questions that his curious host would fain have asked him and declined an invitation to breakfast. Eating just then was out of the question. He brushed his dilapidated hat, set his garments into some sort of order and went out into the street.

Now the deacon, before his fall, had been a proud and self-confident man. Even now, as we have seen, some remnant of this pride still clung to him, and although he was acquainted with a few Boston people, principally those who visited East Harniss in the summer, he could not bring himself to go to them and beg for assistance. All the rest of the day he aimlessly walked the streets, searching one pocket after the other in the desperate hope of finding a little money or, at least, his return ticket to the Cape. His keys, that had been in the missing wallet, he found in the breast pocket of his coat; how they got there he could not remember.

The same pride that prevented his calling upon acquaintances for help, kept him from appealing to the police. The story that he had to tell seemed so improbable and his recollections of the previous day were so vague, that he doubted even his wife's acceptance of his unsubstantiated statements. Remembrance he had none as to the locality in which he had disgraced him-

self. Then with ever-increasing force would come upon him realization of the fact that he would be regarded in his own town as a drunkard and a thief. He, the leader of the local Good Templars and pillar of the church!

He spent that night in a ten-cent lodging house. Thirty cents of his dollar went for supper and breakfast. In the morning his mind was made up. It was his duty as a man and as a Christian to go home and face the music, and, as he had but sixty cents left, he must walk. And upon his hundred mile tramp he started forthwith.

On the afternoon of the next day he was wearily plodding along a wood road that led into the town of Wareham, perhaps one-half of his journey accomplished. A kind-hearted farmer had given him a fifteen-mile lift in a market wagon, and on a hand car with a section gang he had ridden another ten. These friends in need had evidently regarded him as an eccentric sort of tramp and the deacon had not attempted to alter this impression. He slept in an open wagon shed during the night.

As he hobbled along in the dust of the road he met a grocery wagon. The driver regarded him curiously as he came up, but Darius had become used to being stared at and, holding his head down, kept doggedly on. The man on the wagon seat leaned out and stared still more intently. Then he gave a shout.

"Well, I swear!" he ejaculated.

But Mr. Bachelder was past the point where he took an interest in men who were willing to swear. He did not even look up.

"Well, I'll be hanged!" said the grocery man again. "It's him! Hi! Darius! Darius Bachelder!"

Then the deacon did look up and saw the face that had been a hazy vision since that awful day in Boston, the face of "Al" Small.

"Hey?" he exclaimed, wearily. "Why, why, Mr. Small!"

The sporting grocer leaned back in his seat and laughed at least a year, as Darius was reckoning time. At length

he recovered a portion of his gravity and sprang out of the wagon and came over to the worn and haggard figure in the dust.

"How'd you know I'd come home again?" he asked.

"I didn't," said Mr. Bachelder.

"But what are yer doin' here in Wareham, and what made yer clear out and leave me in Burrows' place the way yer did? They told me yer'd gone out and I hunted ha'f a day, but couldn't find no trace of yer. Where'd yer go?"

"I dunno."

"Don't know?"

"I don't know nothin'. Seems's if I was in a trance or somethin'. All I can remember is a feller named Montgomery and some sass'p'rilla and meetin' you somewheres and then wakin' up in a sort of hotel place. My money was all gone, so I started ter walk home."

"Home? Ter East Harniss?"

"Sartin."

"But what did yer walk fer? Yer had yer ticket."

"No, I didn't."

"Yes, yer did, too! I put it in yer hat, so's yer wouldn't lose it. Let me look."

Mr. Small snatched off the dilapidated tall hat from the deacon's head, turned back the leather band inside and produced a slip of pasteboard.

"There's yer ticket!" he said.

Darius gazed at the card as if hypnotized. Then, all at once, he gave way completely, and, sitting down in the bushes by the side of the road, began to sob like a baby. Mr. Small was greatly taken aback by this performance and strove to comfort him, but it was some time before the deacon could talk coherently. When he did he blurted out the whole pitiful tale.

"Well, I swear!" exclaimed the dumfounded "Al." "So you ain't a sport at all, and them Boston sharps jest worked yer. Well, it's lucky fer you yer got away from 'em or yer'd never have seen yer money again."

"Don't make no odds. They might's well have got it; somebody did. And what'll I say ter the folks at home?"

"Say? Why, say nothin'. I've got

yer money. I only borrowed it. Didn't s'pose I stole it, did yer?"

"You've got it?"

"Sure! and a good pile more besides. Blamed if that cash of yours didn't seem to bring me luck! I won over two hundred dollars afore I quit. Ha'f of it's yours, of course." And the lucky grocer with sporting proclivities produced from his pocket a bulky green roll and proceeded to peel off tempting husks from the same.

It was some time before the amazed Mr. Bachelder could be made to realize that all his lost money had come back to him and that his acquaintance intended to present him with much more beside. When he did realize it he positively refused to accept more than the amount—some fifty-five dollars—that he had with him when he left East Harniss.

"I couldn't take more of it," he insisted. "Don't yer see I couldn't? Yer made it gamblin'?"

Mr. Small grinned a trifle maliciously and seemed about to make some remark. Whatever it may have been, he changed his mind and said, instead:

"All right if yer say so. Guess I'll have ter make it up ter yer in some other way then. Now jump into the cart there and come on home with me. Yer'll have ter have a new hat and some clean things. Them you've got on looks's if they'd been through the war."

The next morning a far different and much more respectable Darius boarded the morning train at Wareham station. He was going to Boston to buy some books and a bookcase for the pastor of the East Harniss Baptist church. Mr. Small came to "see him off."

"Good-by, Darius," the latter called

cheerily, as the train started; "look out for Mr. Montgomery. By the way, I cal'clate I'll have ter send the parson somethin' myself. Got ter git rid of your share of the money somehow."

"No, no, Al!" pleaded the agonized and alarmed Mr. Bachelder. "Don't do nothin' like that! Now yer won't, will yer?"

But Mr. Small only laughed and the train went on.

### III.

The books were beautiful; every one said so. So was the bookcase. The deacon was overwhelmed with compliments, which he seemed anxious to avoid. In the midst of the festivities at the minister's house, "Bill" Higgins, the station agent, came to the door bearing a large wooden box.

"It's fer Mr. and Mrs. Whyte," he said. "Come by express. The train feller said 'twas put on at Wareham."

The box contained a fine silver-plated table service. Everybody gasped with delighted astonishment and expressed themselves as "dyin' ter know who sent it."

"There seems to be no name attached," said Mr. Whyte. "Oh, yes! here is a card in this sugar-bowl."

The sugar-bowl was tall and shaped much like an antique loving-cup. The clergyman read what was written on the card and said amazedly:

"Why, this is most astonishing! There is no name here, but it says: 'This will be a fine thing to drink sarsaparilla out of.'"

Deacon Darius Bachelder actually turned green, but nobody noticed it.

## LINES

By Robert Loveman

ONE by one, the gods we know,  
Weary of our trust,  
One by one, the prophets go,  
Dreaming to the dust.

All the cobweb creeds of men  
Vanish into air,  
Leaving nothing save a "When?"  
Nothing, save a "Where?"



FROM the dim, starry track,  
Never a man comes back;  
Of future weal or woe,  
Never a man doth know.

Nor you, nor I, nor he,  
Can solve the mystery;  
Come let us boldly press  
On to the fathomless.



WHEN Fate hath dealt his mortal thrust,  
And love and life are gone,  
The body will dissolve to dust,  
The gaunt soul stagger on.

Across vast continents of space,  
And shoreless seas of air,  
Seeking its new appointed place,  
Again to do, to dare.



WHAT new visions shall we see  
With immortal eyes?  
What vast pageants will be  
Passing in the skies?

What new melodies shall greet  
Our immortal ears,  
When we reach the far retreat  
O'er the bridge of years?

# THE CALCULATION OF THE COUNTESS

By Mrs. Reginald de Koven

IT was spring and Paris again after five years. My eyes dwelt with keen delight upon all the familiar sights and sounds, upon the rosy sunset fading behind the Arc, and the pink globes of light floating like bubbles among the freshly opened flowers of the locust trees lined the avenues.

I had worked hard during those five years, had finally got my step as first secretary, and now had come to Paris to enjoy a long delayed and long-wished-for *congé*. After Samoa, the taste of Paris had certainly an added flavor. I began to think how I should occupy my leisure; should I indulge my pet weakness and scribble more verses? The little volume which I had published anonymously during my absence had not done so badly.

As I made my way once more among the pleasure-seeking throng which filled the Champs Élysées, my spirits rose responsively; care, loneliness and effort slipped away and I was young again. A line of a half forgotten song began to run in my head. "*La vie est brève qui vaïs-je aimer?*"

Who, indeed? After all, it was good to be alive, and there is always the possibility of the "unexpected." As my thoughts paused upon the phrase, just then in the stream of people coming toward me I saw, of all people, Varonski, whom I had not laid eyes on since those early days in Vienna so long ago. It was surely he. I never knew a man who carried himself quite so well. Another moment, both my hands were in his strong grip, and his somber face

was lit up by the sudden smile I knew so well.

"Well met, well met! little Englishman," he cried, looking down upon me from his great height, "and what is my rising young diplomat doing in Paris?"

There was always a hint of condescension in Varonski's banter; it all came back to me vividly, as his strong individuality reasserted itself and I yielded as I had a thousand times before to the winning warmth of his voice, and found myself presently rolling off to the Bois in a fiacre, bound for Armonville and dinner in his company.

The soft night grew dark about us, as our carriage made its way through the lighted avenues, and into the wooded lanes of the Bois. At the gates of Armonville lanterns hung in many colored circles of inviting brightness against the darkness of the trees. Carriages with glimpses of passing beauty rolled up to the door, and a band of Hungarian gypsies concealed in the shadows of the garden set the air to rhythms of intoxicating sound. Prettiness and gayety, this was the mood, the present tense. We jumped from the carriage, and found our way to a table. The place was crowded with a murmuring throng of beautifully dressed women and their attendant men. The mirrors were bright with reflected lights, dancing in a *tourbillon* of pink and rose and gold. We ordered our dinner and discussed the preliminary cocktail.

"And so you have left Vienna, given

up racing and entered the service?" I asked him.

"Oh, yes," he answered, "there was nothing else to be done. The pace got too hot for me, and so my uncle—it was easy enough, you know—got me this post; but it is only third secretary; my salary won't buy my cigars."

"Not so bad, though, Paris!" I said, thinking of Bulgaria, Samoa and the broiling exile of my last years of service. "You are lucky, as always."

"Lucky, with this beggarly pittance?"

"You! beggarly?"

"Yes, indeed;" his face was gloomy enough now. "You know how it went—my money—I never could resist a pretty face."

"There were some very pretty faces in Vienna, if I remember rightly."

"Their prettiness has cost me dear," he said.

"Dear indeed," I answered, with a real regret as I looked at my old friend and noted the changes the years had wrought in his face. Here was a man endowed with every gift of fortune and of mind, bitter, old at heart, all capacity for genuine feeling burned as in a fire-swept field by the life he had led. The fiery Hungarian eyes looked back at me with their old frankness, but they were desperately sad.

"Ah, Alex, old man," I cried, the old name rising to my lips, "you should marry; there are women different from those you have known, there are such things as tenderness and youth and trust."

"Tenderness?" he answered. "Could I feel it, give it? I have received much in my life and never felt it."

I knew he had not; he was always truthful, one of his many charms for me, and yet as I marveled at the confession and felt again the brutal virility of his type, as expressed in the singular low brow, the strong, full throat, I wondered if he was to blame for his lack of idealism, a lack his own intelligence marveled at and deplored. He always felt my comprehension of him.

"I cannot help it, you know," he continued, musingly. "I would marry if I could, believe me. I am tired of all

the useless harm I seem to bring to every one who is unlucky enough to care for me. I want my own wife and children. That is my dream. But I will not marry for money, at least not yet."

Was this dreamer Varonski? What a wondrous change! a change which had come too late, I feared, but I answered:

"No dream is impossible; wait! Life has surprises for the worst of us; yes, and the best. In the meantime, of course, my Galahad is a knight without reproach."

"In the meantime," he laughed, bitterly, "I go on in the old way. It is like this champagne I am drinking—I hate it, yet I cannot do without it."

As he raised the glass to his lips his hand stopped suddenly, and his clear, gypsy eyes blazed in a sudden recognition.

"Don't look yet; wait a minute," he said, under his breath.

There was a stir of chairs behind me, the rustle of a woman's dress. I waited a moment; then I turned just as the newcomers took their seats at the table behind us.

"Good Lord!" I exclaimed, "the Countess Olga!"

"Yes," he replied, "Olga, and more beautiful than ever." His last words were a curse.

"Married again?" I asked. "To that old man?"

"Yes; a month after I left Vienna. What devilish luck! The last woman I wanted to see."

Never did face belie words as did Varonski's now. There is a certain look which the one supremely interesting person brings to the eyes. That look I saw unmistakably now, and very becoming it was. It quite transformed the somber features, and I saw again before me the youthful Varonski—fiery, handsome, irresistible, as of old. I stole another look behind me. Yes, there was no doubt of it, she was more beautiful than ever. When I had first known her, a mere girl, Countess Olga, as we all called her, was the most perfect type of Hungarian beauty I had ever seen. A



little too round, perhaps, with the perfection of a full-blown flower, dark as a gypsy, with thick, shadowy masses of hair growing low over a brow of velvet smoothness, brown eyes softly mobile, with the peculiar dreamy darkness which one sees among the Hindoos and the Hungarians, the whole effect dangerous, infinitely disturbing and distracting. Already I noticed that all eyes were turning toward her, and I heard the little murmur of admiration and of comment following her entrance, and it all came back vividly—the thrill, the excitement which she had always aroused when she entered a ballroom, a theatre, or a café, in the old days. I turned to Varonski.

"You are right—more beautiful than ever. And her history? If I mistake not, Alex, you can tell me all about what happened?"

"What hasn't happened?" he replied, with affected indifference. "There was her husband, Van Salm; you know about that, I suppose?"

"Yes, I heard; killed himself, didn't he?"

"Before her very eyes! He believed in her, you know, and then besides there wasn't a sou left; she had ruined him."

I turned again and looked at the woman, to discover, if I could, in her lovely face some sign of cruelty or perhaps some trace of the tragedy she had faced. I saw neither; the exquisite little features were as ideally smooth and unmarked by any line of experience or of suffering as when I had known her in all the innocence of her girlhood. It has always been hard for me to realize that there are moral as well as physical atrophies; that compassion, self-reproach, conscience, actually do not exist in certain natures. This human creature, this perfect flower of physical loveliness, was one of these. She could look upon her husband, dead because of her, and smile as she was smiling now, as happily as any child.

"And after this? You say there was nothing left. What did she do?"

"She went on the stage."

"From choice?"

"Why not? You remember her

voice; there isn't a better in Europe, and then of course there were more jewels, and more men mad about her than ever. Yes, she liked it well enough in spite of the fact that she was, of course, completely *déclassée*. Vienna forgave her lovers, but not the theatre."

"Naturally; but you, Alex; could you not keep her from it?"

"My dear fellow, by that time she had used up about all I had, as well, and she was quite ready for the change; the novelty amused her. No, I could not persuade her. She wouldn't even marry me."

"You don't mean to say you would have married her?"

"Yes; anything rather than leave her."

"But why?"

"Don't ask me. I tell you that woman is like a fever; her face, her voice, they get into one's blood. If you don't understand, don't try to. I, too, would have killed myself for her; the cup she gives to drink is madness."

"But how did it end? How did you leave her?"

"I didn't; they took me away by force. One night my brother found me, pretty far gone, I fancy; I did not know where he was taking me, and the next morning I woke up in Paris."

"Very lucky you were. But this old boy, this man she is married to?"

"He is very rich, and has one of the best names in Spain. I heard he was completely infatuated with her, and *enfin*, she tired of the stage, as she does of everything, and married him; his fortune is large enough to satisfy even her."

"And when she tires of him?"

"Ah!" He shrugged his shoulders. "He will not be so easy to get rid of, but she will do it."

"How?"

The words had hardly left my lips, when a waiter approached and quietly slipped a card under Varonski's plate. Startled, I turned around. Had she begun already? I could not tell whether it was she who had sent it. She was talking and laughing with the prettiest unconcern, her husband listening to her

with smiling pride. I had only glanced at him before. I watched him carefully now. He was old, yes, but no dotard. Tall, distinguished, with the curling white mustache of the Spanish grandee, fiery-eyed still, and elaborately dressed, pride in every gesture of his well-kept, jeweled hands. She would only deceive him once, that was plain. Varonski put the card into my hands without a word. It contained her address, and his *petit nom*, "Alex"; only that, with the words "you will come." I gave it back to him, watching anxiously as I saw him begin to write his answer. Some instinct made me try to prevent him.

"Don't write, Alex; take care, old man."

"Why?" he answered. "I told her," he straightened her shoulders, "I should not come."

In another moment his message was put into her hand. I watched the little comedy with keen interest. She arose, beckoning to the waiter for her cloak, and turning she took the card quite unobserved from his hand, and read the message. I drew a breath of relief; but to my horror and astonishment she turned suddenly and with a wonderful expression of offended dignity and pride, gave the card to her husband, glancing, as she did so, unmistakably toward us. In another moment her husband approached us with the card in his hand.

"Pardon me, gentlemen," (never have I seen such perfect courtesy) "pardon the interruption, but to which of these gentlemen am I indebted for this communication to my wife?"

He showed the card first to me. Varonski had told me the truth, the message refused her request, but in words of intimacy, not to say insult, which all too well expressed their old relation and his outraged love. Its imprudence amazed me. No wonder she had revenged herself. How had he dared to anger her like this? I was so stupefied that I remained silent during the instant that the card was handed to me, and the next moment he had passed it to Varonski, who instantly arose to his feet. The reckless flush had faded from his

face and he was white, controlled, and as cool as his antagonist. Antagonists, I saw they were to be. In one moment, out of the strange complications of life, this tragedy had arisen.

"I wrote this," I heard Varonski say, "and I am entirely at your service."

"I shall send my friends to you."

"At your convenience," Varonski answered, handing him his card.

"I wish you good-evening, messieurs, and again I ask your pardon for the interruption," and with this the old man returned to his wife.

A moment more and they passed out and we heard their carriage as it rolled away.

"My God! Alex! what does this mean?"

He resumed his place at the table, relit his half smoked cigar.

"You asked, I think," he said, smiling from behind a cloud of smoke, "you asked how she would get rid of him."

"You don't mean she did it?"

"*Exprès!* Just that," he answered.

"Shall you kill him?" Varonski was a perfect shot, a perfect swordsman; I thanked God for that.

"We shall see."

Three days after our curious adventure at Armenonville I found myself again with Varonski driving toward the Bois. The morning was immaculate, a fleckless summer sky, fresh airs blowing with a soft dampness from the wet trees, birds singing in the branches. It was ironical, all this smiling nature; the *décor* was so conventionally theatrical that it struck me almost as a dramatic platitude. How could such a thing have happened? I kept asking myself the question, as we drove in almost complete silence toward the selected place of meeting.

"You understand, I suppose," Varonski said at last, just as we left the carriage, "I shall not kill him, that old man. I shall fire in the air. I have been thinking it out. I have known better all this time, known what a mad idiot I was, yet I persisted. We must all pay for our mistakes, and this is my day of reckoning."

"I can't see how you deserve this, Alex," I answered; "you are no worse than any one else; you have only lived a man's life."

"A man's life," he interrupted me, savagely. "A man's destruction! Don't make light of it. I have been a fool; but if he doesn't kill me—if I get another chance, I shall be so no longer—you will see."

I looked at him in astonishment, glad to hear the real man speaking thus under the final test. The good brain, the manly stuff in him had crystallized. Varonski had found himself at last. I could not speak, and forbore to use any of the futile arguments which hurried to my lips. Quixotic, foolhardy, I might call him, but I knew that words were useless to alter his decision.

We had already reached the wood and the open space near a little lake, where it had been decided we should meet.

There were only a few moments' delay. Countess Olga's husband was already there with his second and the physician. As the two men raised their hats in salutation, the farce of it again struck me, it was so absurd, so incredible, that this stranger should hold Varonski's life in his hand.

The two men took their places and I looked from one to the other. Varonski's splendid shoulders looked broader than ever, as he stood there in the clear morning light. His antagonist seemed older, I thought, than when I had seen him in the evening. There was a startling pallor in the fine old face; pride, race were there in every feature, but illness as well. I noticed that his physician had given him some stimulant, and as he took his place opposite Varonski a little color came into his lips and cheeks.

"Are you ready, gentlemen?"

The short preliminaries had been arranged in as few moments as it takes to say "*Bon jour*," and there they stood, the young man and the old facing each other in silence, death between them.

"One, two, three." I heard my own voice uttering the words.

"Fire!"

I was standing just behind Varonski; saw his arm lifted far above his head and heard the double shock of the pistol fire. The birds had been singing in a perfect chorus to the rising sun, but all was silent in an instant, and through the rising cloud of smoke I saw a leaf fluttering slowly to the ground. Varonski stood upright, but his antagonist was swaying forward, his face one moment before so ivory white, now flushed a deep and ominous purple. There was a choking sound in his throat, and then he fell, face forward upon the grass. I rushed to his side, the doctor turned him over; there was no blood, no wound, but he lay there quite motionless, no breath issuing from the purple lips.

"*N'approche pas, monsieur*," I heard the doctor say, "*de l'air, de l'air*," and he tried to force brandy between the clinched teeth. It was quite useless. I could see that, even from the distance to which I immediately retired.

Varonski stood upright and quite motionless, his empty pistol sending up its little film of smoke. His antagonist's shot had gone perfectly wide. A deep breath, a flush of color over his grave face alone showed how he received his reprieve, the one more chance which he had craved of life.

"Count Varonski," said the doctor at last, approaching us, "your antagonist is dead by a stroke of apoplexy which seized him at the instant when he fired. He is quite untouched."

"You are quite sure?"

"Quite. You fired?"

"In the air," Varonski answered, pointing to the fallen leaf.

"There is nothing we can do?" I asked.

"Nothing whatever."

We lifted our hats in silence, and in another moment Varonski and I were walking through the quiet woods back to our carriage. I looked at my watch. We had been just seven minutes in the place of meeting, and the birds were again singing overhead.

Gravity and silence still dwelt upon Varonski's face. His chance, his one more chance; he had it and he knew it,

but who could tell his thoughts? Would he really take it seriously? So wondering, I walked in silence by his side in the quiet of the morning. I had not long to wait for an answer to my unspoken thought, for one more incredible test was to be his. Among the singing of the birds there arose suddenly another voice in song, piercingly sweet, in Carmen's oft sung challenge.

"*Si je t'aime, prends garde à toi!*" How she sang it! We stopped involuntarily, and then before us out of the woods, dressed in her riding habit, Countess Olga came stepping toward us in all her youth and beauty, with an unveiled look of love in her dangerous eyes.

I could not escape; in a moment she was holding Varonski's hands, clinging to him, triumphant in her charm, radiant and daring.

"He is dead," she cried, "that old man! You fired in the air! I was there watching! I saw it all! Oh, Alex!" She was close to him; her arms went around his neck. "Oh! I am so glad, so glad! I am rich now, so rich!" She laughed a low, delicious laugh. "We will never part again."

Varonski's hands held her for a moment, one moment his lips were on hers; hungrily he kissed her as one who has thirsted long. I shall never forget the passionate vision of that embrace. Then he held her at arm's length.

"You did it, Olga, on purpose?"

She laughed again, thinking she had won him.

"Of course; did you think that I would let you go for long? Of course I did it. Aren't you glad? Kiss me, kiss me again, *quelle coupe divine que vos lèvres!*"

Varonski's face turned now, as I watched it, to unflinching stone. He

forced her from him, holding her wrists in his strong grip, and looking searchingly into her eyes, which finally drooped before him.

"This is true, you wished his death, you planned it?"

"Yes," came faintly from her lips, "for your sake."

"You made me your tool, to rid you of your husband; you risked my life—you! Oh! I cannot speak, I never wish to see your face again!"

"Alex, Alex, I knew you could kill him. I love you, only you!"

"No fault of yours that I am alive to tell you what I think of you. How many more men would you ruin? Understand!"—he was brutal enough now—"I am done with you, and all of your kind."

Still his hands forced her from him, and at last, gazing at his unchanging face, she saw that she was beaten.

"I am not good enough for you? Since when this wondrous change?" The smile upon those childish lips turned me to horror, for here at last the soul of the woman was revealed, her innate cruelty and vulgarity. "Not good enough for you, Alex Varonski? Oh! *Là, là.*" Then he let her go, and laughing, with a light "Good-morning, messieurs," she swept me a defiant glance and left us.

"A very pretty calculation of the countess," said I, drawing a long breath. "A pity it was not more successful."

"Gods! can such women live?" answered Varonski, in a shaken voice.

For a moment we both stood there looking after her as she disappeared among the trees, and then again her song came back to us, echoing clearly through the morning.

"*Si tu ne m'aimes pas; je t'aime, si je t'aime, prends garde à toi.*"



# UNDER THE SURFACE

By Annie C. Muirhead

## PART I.

### THE WOMAN.

WHEN you have a lump in your throat, a cigarette is a good expedient to prevent ulterior consequences. You can't both cry and smoke at the same time.

Some such consideration—for she was not at the moment in the mood to get any pleasure out of a cigarette—moved Mrs. Courthope to pick out a tiny Phil Morris from the fantastic little cigarette box by her side, and listlessly light it. Just in time, too, for the tears were brimming her eyes before she had taken her first puff.

It was not often that she let herself be alone; but Mrs. Van Ingen had just that moment gone, and before Mrs. Courthope could get back to her seat after saying good-by to her visitor, the dreariness and emptiness of her life seized like a nightmare upon the unoccupied moment and made her heart swell in an agony of pity for herself.

So then she had recourse to the cigarette, trying to skim over the moment with averted face, as she had done so often before.

It was a bright and cozy den in which she sat; but her face was so miserable that it seemed to darken the very room, in spite of the lamplight.

Mrs. Courthope's acquaintances dubbed the room characteristic of its up-to-date inhabitant. If they had been a trifle more subtle in their observation, they would have recognized that its frivolous style was but a mask behind which her gloomy soul tried to hide from itself. She did not dare to have

anything the least serious or dark or sad in her surroundings, lest it reminded her when she was trying to forget.

The crisis in her life had come, and she was afraid. She dreaded taking the decisive step, for she knew that if she left her husband's house, even if only under cover of a trip to Europe, she would never have the courage to come back to it. Therefore, at the last moment, she hung back; and though every detail of the proposed start had been talked over with apparent enthusiasm, and eagerly arranged with Mrs. Van Ingen, she had instinctively insisted on leaving a loophole of escape by saying that it would, after all, depend on her husband's approval whether she could go or not; she had not yet consulted with him. Of course, Mrs. Van Ingen heartily concurred with such a mere matter of form. Ah! there was the sting! It was a mere matter of form. If he would only exercise his right, and care enough to forbid her to go, how glad she would be in spite of herself! But she knew he would not interfere.

The wood fire had burned itself almost out; but, notwithstanding the chill, she was too deep in her dreamy thoughts to see that it needed renewal. The cold ashes dropped off her neglected cigarette onto the polished floor. Her eyes were staring straight in front of her; she was looking back to the beginning of her married life, when it had seemed as if glorious opportunities of happy and generous living were opening up to her.

The truth was, they had married in too great a hurry. Her husband had been so eager to rescue her from poverty that he had insisted marrying

her offhand. If they had waited till they had known each other better, it would have been wiser. From the first, then, she had had misgivings that she might not be able to play the part of wife to such a man, whose name was already impressed on the public mind. An exceptional man needs an exceptional wife. That she could not claim to be. She felt too ignorant, too inexperienced, too limited in her outlook. But she had begun by bravely doing her best.

And, indeed, perhaps it testified to the delicacy of her nature that she was capable of these misgivings. The astonishing thing, in going around the world, is to observe the utter lack of judgment of most wives: Women allied to men immeasurably their superiors do not appear to have an inkling of the true state of the case, and conduct themselves complacently, in the very face of the mocking world, as their husbands' equals or betters; while, on the other hand, often an insufferable idiot, from the masculine point of view, is looked up to and worshiped by an adoring wife whose shoestrings he is not worthy to stoop down and tie.

In this instance, unfortunately, the diffidence of Alick Courthope's wife led her to imagine meanings in words and actions that had never been intended. She was sensitive, therefore her feelings were always being hurt; and proud, therefore careful to hide the fact that they had been so hurt. Thus, little by little, so gradually that in the beginning neither of them noticed it, husband and wife drifted apart.

At first, she would have been more than content to stay at home with him in the evenings while he worked at that absorbing work of his which occupied him morning, noon and night; but he always strongly insisted on her going into society even when he could not accompany her, till she began to feel he must be anxious to get rid of her; and at last, in proud acquiescence, she had gone about everywhere, and pretended entire contentment at appearing without her husband when really her heart was sore and mor-

tified. In her inexperience she did not realize how much a matter of course it was for husbands and wives in society to go their separate ways; and, anyhow, the life was so new and strange for her that her husband's presence would have been an invaluable moral support. She was too proud to give him any hint of this, however, and he was too pre-occupied to notice.

In her attempt to seem wholly happy and contented, gradually a frivolous rattlepate manner had grown like a hard glaze over her real feelings, and she got the credit of being gay and careless and even fast; and she was glad when she heard people say so, for it meant that she had successfully concealed her disappointment. Disappointment is, after all, a weak word for the overthrow of all her hopes of happiness in married life!

Feverishly she threw herself into all kinds of gayeties, without much discrimination as to what they were, provided they filled the hour and kept her from thinking; and became naturally associated with people who went in for similar amusements, the most empty-headed and reckless of the people she encountered, Mrs. Van Ingen, a *divorcée*, whose reputation was none of the best, chief among them. This had vexed her husband; he had remonstrated with her on her choice of friends. She, feeling hurt that he had not done more to help her in selecting her friends, had retorted flippantly; and the mischief was done. He never spoke to her on the subject again.

It was more than a pity she did herself the injustice to be content with inferior society, when she was clever enough for better things; still it was easy enough to understand; for it was little effort to her to be amusing behind her mask for the benefit of Mrs. Van Ingen and company. With really congenial spirits, she could hardly have concealed herself so well; and to suspect that any outsider saw her unhappiness and pitied her was like a touch on the raw to her peculiar temperament.

Being pretty, superficially lively and



married, she was attended by a cluster of more or less juvenile admirers, who bored her considerably; but she encouraged them as it were from a sense of duty, realizing that to keep several flirtations going at once was part of the game she had chosen to play. Chief among her satellites was young Chickering, the only one among them for whom she had anything like real affection; they had known each other long before her marriage, and having many youthful memories in common, it was natural they should find comradeship in each other.

Chickering had married a wife much older than himself, a plain, clever woman, of whom, reversing the usual order of things in such cases, he was frantically jealous. It was a childish jealousy, too, not only of the men who in the natural course of existence had speech with her, but also of her club, of her books, of the many interests that engaged her attention. However, he had also a wholesome awe of his sensible wife and her clever sarcastic tongue (for she was wont to make kindly fun of his jealousies and had no idea of giving in more than was reasonable), and he did not let her know all that he felt. He had had too often the experience, as a result of his outbursts, of being made to see what a fool he had been and how there was absolutely no ground for his agitation; but being of the temperament he was, his feeling was by no means a matter of reason with him, and he continued to feel suspicious and uncomfortable in spite of excellent proofs why he should not be. Debarred, therefore, from unburdening himself to his wife as often as he would have liked, it was a necessity of his nature to unburden himself to some one else, and it was natural that Lila Courthope should be his confidant. She understood him and knew him well enough to make such confidences possible. Partly, too, he had the petty hope of making his wife jealous of him in return; and Lila was not the first woman he had outwardly and openly devoted himself to for this purpose, with always very disappointing results,

as far as his tranquil, sweet-minded wife was concerned.

In this way it was he had got into the habit of acting as Mrs. Courthope's escort wherever she wanted to go. And, of course, people began to talk. It is always the obvious that excites casual observers into supposing they have divined a mystery. Lila was too indifferent to care. She let them talk, and in her recklessness and scorn of the talkers, even made a point of being kinder than ever to Chickering, at a time, too, when his petulance and folly had bored her almost to rupture point. She had at heart little sympathy with his attitude toward his wife, who was a great deal too good for him. Sometimes she comforted him, sometimes she teased him, according to the mood she might be in; and at times when she was too weary of him to be patient, did not hesitate to tell him plainly that his intellectual wife must needs occasionally have more intellectual companionship than he was capable of giving. He did not resent this; all he wanted was some one to whom he could pour out and bemoan himself, and few days passed that he did not seek out Lila for this purpose.

And then one day her sympathy with poor Chickering was riveted by finding out that he and she were partners in suffering. Suddenly she had awakened to the fact that while she had been philandering with Chickering, her husband had been offering his "intellectual companionship," with acceptance, to Chickering's wife. Other people noticed it, too, for it was a malicious remark made in her hearing about "an amicable interchange of partners" that had first aroused her to the situation. After that, she watched with keen and hungry eyes and noted how regularly her husband called on Mary Chickering; how pleased he was when they met each other out of an evening; how much a matter of course it seemed to be among hostesses that Mr. Courthope should take Mrs. Chickering in to dinner; how protecting and tender a way he had with her; how gently and admiringly he always spoke of her, when Lila tested his feel-

ings and tortured herself by introducing her name; he never opened up the subject himself.

She had felt miserable enough before, but this new development added poignancy to her misery. It brought to a head her growing suspicion that her husband had married her in a moment of generous impulse, out of pity, and had since repented it. He behaved now as if he were ashamed of her, and looked elsewhere for sympathy.

At this point in her unhappy meditations, Mrs. Courthope groaned aloud: "Oh! what a sordid world it is! Are all other women I meet as unhappy as I, and have to hide it, as I do, with a grin for a smile? Are husbands and wives at odds like this all the world over? Oh! why was I ever born? What can my life be now but one slow despair?"

She restlessly changed her position as if a sharp pain had stung her, and her thoughts went on in miserable reminiscence.

One day, when Chickering had burst in upon her in one of his despairing moods, it was to complain to her of her own husband's attentions to the foolish youth's own wife. She felt only too keenly that for once in his life he had reason, and her dull, heavy heart seemed to sink lower and lower by its own weight as he spoke; but she had summoned up enough artificial fire to astonish the young man and make him feel for the time being ashamed of himself.

Just at that moment her husband had walked into the room and looked inquiringly from one to the other. She was seized by a wild dread lest Chickering should pounce upon this opportunity to ease his boyish wrath. Instinctively, she wished to spare her husband a vulgar scene; the one thing vivid to her consciousness was that he must be got out of the room at all costs and immediately. Nervous and ill at ease, she had answered his remarks at random—she could not now remember their import—and made clumsy pretexts to induce him to go. He had looked at her strangely and gone.

She had felt that after this he would surely speak to her, that they would have it out between them at last. But he never did. He became colder and graver in his manner to her than ever; and did not stop visiting Mary Chickering.

Lila felt that she could not bear it. At night, she lay awake thinking dismally of the wretched situation. Generally she was too miserable to cry; but one never-to-be-forgotten night, worn-out nature asserted itself, and she had burst into a fit of sobbing, and could not control her sobs, though she stifled them as much as possible that her husband in the adjoining room might not hear. But she had heard him stir, and get out of bed, and come toward her. And oh! how her heart leaped to think that perhaps he meant to take her in his arms and comfort her! How sweet it would be to confess themselves to one another; it might be so possible to make it all up again and begin afresh!

And as she waited with bated breath, the next thing she knew, the door between their rooms was being softly closed—from the other side.

The indifference, the insult of the action struck her with a shock so great that for a long, icy interval her heart stood still; and her sobs were over for that night.

From that moment she understood how he must hate her; and the situation grew intolerable. A wild desire to flee away from it all filled her mind to the exclusion of any thought as to what lay beyond. She must, whatever happened, free him from the perpetual discomfort of her presence.

Opportunity at this juncture Mrs. Van Ingen had announced her intention of escaping to the South of Europe for the remainder of the winter. It seemed a Heaven-sent opportunity. Lila clutched at the chance of going with her—and then feared the moment of breaking loose when it came. Had things, indeed, come to such a pass that she was planning to leave the shelter of her husband's roof?

It only remained for her to tell him so.

She aroused herself with a shiver as the man came in to remove the tea things, conscious for the first time of the physical chill that hurt her, after all, less than the chill at her heart. He handed her a pile of notes that had come by the afternoon's mail—nothing but invitations, evidently, and she laid them aside without opening the envelopes. "More weariness to the flesh and the spirit!" she thought, with a sigh. They were dining out that night, she recollected with dull distaste. Well! It would soon be over!

As the man bent down to try to revive the dead fire, she inquired of him whether Mr. Courthope had come in yet, and learned that he was in the study.

She arose and went to him.

---

## PART II.

### THE MAN.

There is no such effective furniture as books; and as the room was lined with them from floor to ceiling, it had an exceedingly comfortable look. For the rest, a plain, brown rep carpet, and just the plainest and most necessary furniture; for the room was a workshop, not a showroom.

It was real work, too, that was turned out of this den.

Alick Courthope was a man of independent fortune, but had none the less the strong impulse to honest toil that had made his name famous in the scientific world. At that moment, his writing table was strewn with letters from distinguished men all over the world, congratulating him on a recent treatise of his that had meant a valuable contribution to the advancement of medical science, or corresponding with him concerning difficult points in the work. It was the sort of honor a man might work for diligently all his life and die without attaining; and it had come to him when he was still comparatively young, and ought to have been able to

enjoy his triumph. Whereas, it had been like dust and ashes in his mouth.

When a man's foes are they of his own household, what peace is there for him in all the world?

Alick Courthope sat there before his desk, his head bowed in his hands, oblivious of his success; a most miserable man.

Since that day he had surprised them together, the man flushed and embarrassed, standing awkwardly with his back to him even while inarticulately mumbling some attempt at a salutation; his wife nervous and perturbed, her every word and movement making it evident to him, the husband, that he was not wanted, that he had interrupted; since that day, he had realized that the crisis had come, and that things could not go on as they had been doing much longer. He had been living in cruel suspense these last few days, wincing and starting at every footfall, at every opening door, fearing it was his wife come to put into actual words the spectral, ghastly truth that stood between them. It would be a relief, too, when that moment had come and gone.

The agony he was suffering was as much for her sake as for his own.

"Poor little woman! Poor little woman!" was the refrain that knelled continually through his big, aching heart. He would have given worlds, given up his own happiness gladly if that had not already been destroyed, to have saved her the pain.

He knew very well that she would do nothing to dishonor him. She was not the sort to sink so low as that. He guessed, indeed, that that scene in her sitting-room had meant the crushing of the man's hopes. The thing had come to a head, and had to be acknowledged between them; but he knew from the attitude of both that they had decided for the path of honor, not of inclination. Very probably, Chickering had not put any crude proposal before her, after all. Though Chickering was a fool, he was not altogether a cad; and Courthope's honest heart would not let him believe that the other man was capable of such infamy either

toward the woman he loved or the woman he had ceased to love. But the pair had been caught together in the toils of a strong emotion that ran counter to their duty, and were suffering.

Strange, thought Courthope, with a dim, hurt feeling, as near bitterness as he was capable of approaching—strange that a mere pink-and-white-and-blond nonentity like Chickering could inspire a strong passion in so unusual a woman; while he, Courthope, a man of brain and character, who had done something in the world that the world thought worth honoring, was of no account in her eyes!

However unworthy the cause, she was suffering. That was where the cruellest pang stabbed him: she was suffering, and he could not help her.

Poor Mary Chickering! A dull throb of sympathetic pain added to his burden of woe, as he thought of her, and what it would mean to her when her eyes were opened to see what was going on. She was herself so large-hearted it was impossible for her to conceive of treachery, hardly possible for her to see it even when it was thrust upon her notice. Hitherto, he really believed, she was not conscious of her husband's disloyalty. He had been much with her lately, for she had been reading the proofs of his book with him, and there had been nothing the least different from usual in her cheerful, composed demeanor. Fortunately, she was delightfully absent-minded, and innocently overlooked the deliberate efforts Chickering made in her very presence to impress her, by his silly methods of devotion to another woman. Poor Mary Chickering!

Poor neglected wives all the world over! It's a hard world for women! It had been a hard world for Lila! She was a loyal little soul in essence, he knew, and a bitter part of her punishment must be the thought that she had wrecked her husband's happiness as well as her own.

Still, things could not go on so; and he had been pondering and dreading the solution.

It was all his fault for marrying so young a wife; it had been selfish of him. A middle-aged, solemn, learned old foggy like himself, so much taken up with the grave responsibilities of his work, how little time he had to look after a young wife, and take her about, and see that she had amusement! Of course, she liked to associate with those of her own age and tastes—she had had so little fun in her life before—and he had always encouraged her in that and insisted on it even when she protested. It had been a blow to him, though, to see how easily she took to the more frivolous side of life—the most frivolous kind of people. (He had the wistful tenderness of a man who has married late in life. A younger man would have spoken out and complained testily, where he was silent, setting down his disappointment to his own clumsy misunderstanding of women and their ways.)

It was unfortunate that just after their marriage had been the crucial time in the work for his treatise, with which he had meant to surprise her, proudly and happily, when once it was published. But his mistake lay further back, in his having married her at all. The temptation had certainly been great; he had lived so much of his life alone, and when he met this girl, in circumstances that made her seem extraordinarily sympathetic and congenial, it was only human nature to feel a strong longing for her companionship, and he was head-over-ears in love with her before he knew it. He had been thinking too much of his own happiness, and too little of hers.

And yet he could not honestly accuse himself of that, either, as his thoughts wandered back (so glad to be reprieved!) to the days of his courtship. She had been poor; he was rich. He had thought so much of making life easier for her, of opening up new opportunities of happiness for her; he had meant so tenderly to cherish her that she might never again know what hardship meant. And now this worst of all hardships had come upon her; she was in love with another man than her own

husband. (Already his thoughts were back again in the cruel, chafing present.)

Even if he had not been able to imagine her trouble, he knew too well by his own experience what she must be suffering. He knew, alas, too well! what it meant; that continual aching yearning for the being he loved, that he might take her in his arms, and caress her, and call her tender names, and do loverlike things for her, as of old; and he knew the hard necessity of holding back, that his kisses might not be a dreadful mockery to her! Just so must she be yearning for the other man, and not daring to show her love.

Those long, sleepless nights he had fought through, they had been almost too much for his brain, strong man as he was; and how could the frail little woman be standing them!

He had heard her sobbing once in the night; it had made him gasp with sharp pain. He could not bear it—and yet he might not go to comfort her! He had got up at last when tortured beyond endurance and softly shut the door between their rooms that he might not hear those sobs that stabbed him. Ever since then, that door had been shut, by night and by day.

It was cruel for the poor little woman to be alone in her misery, and his heart bled for her. But if he were to show that he knew, that he understood, she could only feel worse. He had to pretend not to notice; and the ghastly comedy went on between them.

And now there she was in the study confronting him, saying the commonplace words that covered up so much hidden tragedy!

She had not been feeling well lately; too much gayety had been bad for her, perhaps; she thought a change might do her good, and so—if he didn't mind—she had arranged a trip to Europe with Mrs. Van Ingen.

That was all. An innocent, ordinary enough proposal! But he seemed to hear his death knell in the words.

It was just as well that they shouldn't have to keep up the straining pretense

before each other; but he realized that this was the beginning of the end. Having tasted her freedom, she would never be able to come back to him. Never. And he must live all the rest of his life without her. Alone.

The agony was surging through his brain, but there was no outward sign, as in a few, civil, kindly words he signified his approval of the plan. The sooner she got away the better, he thought. He would arrange so that she could draw on bankers both in London and Paris, there need be no anxiety as to funds, and so on.

Not one word of what it would mean to him.

She slowly turned away. They both knew that the thoughts loudly crying in the breast of each were not the thoughts that came to articulate utterance; and yet how far away they both were from imagining the thoughts unexpressed!

Just at the door she turned. A natural impulse, conquering her pride and misery and all—it was not even the usual self-pity she felt for herself, but pure, undiluted sorrow—made her turn and say:

"Won't you be the least little bit sorry to have me go?"

She meant to say the words lightly, but her voice sounded strained, and there was piteous appeal in her eyes, in her outstretched hands.

He strode across the room to her and crushed her almost savagely in his arms. The breaking-down point had been reached. This was the last time he might ever have her in his arms, and he could not resist his longing.

The least little bit sorry? That was, indeed, too much! When it would mean lifelong agony for him! For him who loved her! Who thrilled at the music of her voice even when he knew he had lost her! Whose eyes were famished when they went without seeing her for a single day! Whose heart would be torn when she left him! She must not be allowed to think it cost him nothing to let her go!

Something to this effect, in wild, broken language, he poured over her, in

sudden passionate impulse; and then just as suddenly the next moment was ashamed of his selfish outburst, of having let his feelings break the reticence he had so long and so strongly kept on her account.

He unfolded his arms from around her, and would have released her, but she was clinging to him, exclaiming with a strange, new note of joy in her voice:

"Oh, Alick! be true with me! Do you *really* feel like that? Oh! put your arms around me again—your dear, strong arms! It is so long, long since I felt them there!"

And what could he do but fold her again closely to his heart, and kiss her lips and her eyes and her hair, and murmur broken incoherent words of tenderness? But heart-to-heart like that, there was no need for them of words—they *knew* that they loved each other!

It was so simple, after all! One little natural cry straight from her heart, one moment's yielding to a natural impulse on his side—and the strange barrier of misunderstanding that had been built up between them melted away!

They had the understanding at once. The explanation might wait. It would come bit by bit to fit into this curious puzzle of misapprehension.

---

### PART III.

#### HUSBAND AND WIFE.

They were engaged for a dinner party that very evening, as it happened.

At first, it had seemed incongruous to them in their exaltation of spirit to come down to ordinary levels and do anything so commonplace as go out to dinner.

But, also, in their great and newly-acquired happiness, they had felt a glow of beneficence toward all the world, and could not bear to cause any one the least inconvenience on their account.

So they decided to keep their dinner engagement.

Afterward, they could go away somewhere, out of the reach of social duties, on a second honeymoon; for, as Lila said, it was as good as being married all over again.

Of course, the trip to Europe with Mrs. Van Ingen had melted out of their future as if it had never been in prospect.

The genial clatter of knives and forks, and the hubbub of gay conversation around a charmingly-appointed dinner table are an odd enough accompaniment, perhaps, to two hearts singing a psalm of thanksgiving! But the owners of the hearts had no care to be critical.

The dinner party was in full swing. Mrs. Delafield had the exhilarating consciousness permeating her every look that it was "going off" well. Her table looked perfect. Her new *chef* (this was the first big dinner she had given since that important functionary came to her) had come up nobly to the glowing eulogy he had borne with him from his last employer. Still more important than that, the guests themselves were doing their very best to promote their hostess' triumph; everybody seemed in good spirits, the conversation was unusually brilliant, and the women were looking their loveliest!

Mrs. Courthope, for instance, was positively beautiful! She had never looked so well! And that dear clever husband of hers was perfectly charming this evening! Indeed, it seemed as if husband and wife had changed *rôles* for the time, for Mrs. Courthope was very quiet, for her, and Mr. Courthope, that generally grave, silent man, was even boyish to-night. He was talking with such ease and brilliancy that he had captured the attention not only of the ladies on either side of him, but also of the people on the opposite side of the table, who had stopped their own conversation to listen to Mr. Courthope's flow of entertaining talk.

As for Lila Courthope, she was too blissful to talk much. While Mrs. Delafield was innocently taking to herself all the credit of the successful dinner



party, Lila more truly discerned that she and her husband were the center around which everything revolved: the world was gay, just because they were happy! The dinner tasted like a complimentary dinner!

She watched her husband's lively spirits with a full and a glad heart, though she was not near enough to him to hear what he was saying. Tears were not far from her eyes as she looked at him (he never cast a glance in her direction; he simply did not dare, poor man, lest his feelings betrayed him into some foolishness!) realizing now how much she must have been responsible in the past for his grave, stern demeanor, and what a weight must formerly have lain heavy on his soul, to judge by his light-heartedness now it was removed.

She herself impressed everybody there that night as being much subdued and softened in manner. The incessant, hard, would-be-smart chatter she generally kept up was gratefully conspicuous by its absence. Mrs. Delafield had been rather dreading her guest's high-pitched talk—it was sometimes so forced and tiresomely trivial, and she had some really clever men at her dinner that night whom she did not want to have bored.

Some one had once complained, apropos of Mrs. Courthope's restless *distract* manner, that she said clever things as if she were talking in her sleep; and looked right over your head when you were addressing her, as if you were a ventriloquist. It was true enough that Lila was absent-minded. Her chatter was kept up to drown the moaning of her own sad heart, and too often her heart moaned louder than her tongue could talk, and usurped her attention. But to-night, she was sympathetic, interesting and interested; in spite of the fact that at every moment, and in every fiber of her being, she was aware of her husband at the other end of the table.

There was a new tender look in her face, so different from her usual hard expression, and a soft radiance in her eyes that was extremely becoming.

Slinger, the famous portrait painter, was sitting at Mrs. Delafield's right hand. He had met Mrs. Courthope often enough before at similar entertainments, but she had never hitherto stirred his professional interest. To-night, it seemed as if he could scarcely take his eyes off her. He kept studying her with keen attention, and confided to his hostess with some emphasis that he would like to paint that woman's portrait, "for she looks *like* a woman, by Jove! and not a mere fashion-plate!"

After dinner, in the drawing-room, the ladies who had been sitting next Mr. Courthope came up to Lila to say pretty things about her husband. Their enthusiasm was quite unfeigned; she felt that she, too, had gone up in their estimation by right of being the wife of so charming and distinguished a man.

Then Mrs. Roy Weston crossed the room on purpose to sit down beside Mrs. Courthope, whom she had hitherto rather avoided. Mrs. Roy Weston represented both wealth and family, and was somewhat of a lawgiver in her own very superior sphere—a sphere that had no cognizance of such people as Mrs. Van Ingen, for instance. She had always looked coldly on Mrs. Courthope's conspicuous little ways, and had secretly deplored the fact that so fine a man as Alick Courthope was thrown away upon such a frivolous, and even common little wife.

For, truly, a disturbance of the heart eats hard into the character on all sides. Lila had certainly deteriorated in many ways since the first suspicion of her wedded unhappiness had crept upon her, and would have gone on deteriorating if this sudden happy check had not come. But now the new soft look, and the new soft manner, the result of a heart at ease, impressed even Mrs. Roy Weston. She vaguely felt that Lila Courthope "had improved lately," and that it was a social duty on her part to signify her approval of the change.

Lila had long wanted to be friends with her, for she knew her husband admired the lady, and she could easily feel that Mrs. Weston represented a far

more desirable world than Mrs. Van Ingen's. What a strange perversity it seemed to her now that had kept driving her along the road she did not wish to travel! It was such an unaccustomed pleasure to be chatting with some one who thoroughly appreciated her husband. Her little talk with Mrs. Roy Weston opened up alluring vistas of the comfort of social intercourse as she had never yet known it.

Mr. Roy Weston joined them for a few moments to utter hearty eulogiums of her husband's recently published book. Then, to be sure, a sharp twinge of remorse disturbed her contentment.

The package of fresh, new copies of his book had arrived a little time ago from the printer's. She had seen them lying on his desk, when he was out of the room, and had proceeded to investigate what they were. And behold! A presentation copy to Mary Chickering lay open in front of her, with an affectionate inscription in her husband's handwriting. This, before he had said a word to her, his wife, about the book! When less than an hour later he had sought her out, and, with a little show of ceremony, and with a little presentation speech explaining what he had been about all those past months, gave her a specially-bound copy of the book, she had been coldly and brutally indifferent. It gave her a pang now to recall his crestfallen look.

But this blast from the cold past only emphasized by contrast the warm comfort of the present. She would be able to make it up to her husband an hundredfold!

Her pride in him was quite touching when she let it come to the surface.

"A very delightful, a very feminine woman!" Mr. Roy Weston commented to his wife on their homeward way that night.

Mr. Slinger was the next person to claim her attention, and took pleasure in drawing her out. She was surprised

herself at the good sense and brightness of her own talk. Her frozen and starving capacities seemed to be quite quickly thawing and unfolding in this new warmth that lapped her soul. She had never liked herself so well!

After all, her sad experience had taught her something; it had not been in vain. She felt as if she had been under a magic spell from which she had awakened to perceive what was really worth while in human life; and her wider expanse of vision enabled her under a magic spell from which she had never understood him before. Henceforth she could be a mate to him as the newly-married girl could not have been. Only now had she attained to the perfect love that casteth out fear. Her sorrow—and his—had been justified, and she was content.

She felt, without looking, that her husband was gradually edging his way to her through the admiring and detaining throng; till at last he stood at her side, suggesting low in her ear that they should take their leave now and go home. He was impatient for home, the dear man!

Chubby little Mrs. Belton bustled up in front of them to make her adieus to their hostess.

"So sorry to leave this delightful party so soon—but I *dare* not stay away from my babies a moment longer! When *you* have a baby," she added, turning with a kindly maliciousness of intention to young Mrs. Courthope, "you will understand that it is an even more absorbing mission in life than a husband!"

Involuntarily, the eyes of husband and wife met for one brief, eloquent moment. Lila turned rosy to the tips of her ears.

All the way home in the carriage he kept tight hold of her hand—but never a word did they say to each other.

# THE MISTRESS OF THE SITUATION

By S. Elgar Benet

THE linden before the porch burned like a lamp on a stem of greenish-black, and under its transparent yellow light an elderly man, with a puzzled look in his eyes, sat on an old white horse and hoped for final instructions.

At fifty-seven Apollonia had a double chin and her figure leaned backward from the perpendicular; she had narrow eyes, with sharp wrinkles at the outer corners. There was a knob of gray hair on the back of her head and a row of waves on each side of her forehead. Her hands were curved in a managerial capacity, and she spoke with the freedom of a woman who has words at command.

"Three pounds of sugar and some soda crackers, and tell Rily the last were stale and what is he willing to take off? Ask what eggs are bringing in trade, and tell him they're twenty-five cents in market; and"—her voice took on additional speed—"if you see Eddie Crowther you tell him I want those hens back, and if he says I can't have 'em you tell him I'm coming after 'em, and if he says the bargain's made, you say I didn't know hens had gone up, and if he tells you that don't make any difference, you tell him——"

David dropped the bridle and held up two protesting hands:

"'Pollonia, I can't. I can't undertake to tell Eddie Crowther nothin' more'n you're comin' after the hens. That'll be enough. My memory don't seem to be what it was; I forget." He listened to the distant whistle of the en-

gine: "There's the mail; somebody'll be before me."

It was his custom to stand at the post office window and be served with Apollonia's mail first. She considered it due to her position, as were the front pew in church, the foremost plot in the burying ground, and the presidency of the Missionary Society.

One of those inexplicable influences which work indifferently for peace or war made her more masterful than usual. She went to the kitchen, where a round-eyed young woman was hanging tins in a row on the wall.

"Martha," she said, sharply, "if you've hung the pans on the top nails they'll have to come down and you might as well begin now."

Martha crossed to the window:

"I do believe the black pig's in the corn!"

Apollonia pushed her aside and sent her voice flying through the hazy air:

"Levin! Levin! Don't you see the hogs in the corn? Is that the way you're wasting every penny your father and I have slaved and toiled, toiled and slaved to save for you? What's the matter with you, Levin? Levin, *don't* you see a whole drove of hogs eating up every ear of corn?"

Martha peeped through the angle made by her shoulder and the sash.

"Seems to me now that's Levin's coat."

A tall man with heavy shoulders hurried up the hill.

"Mother," he said, shortly, "the corn's all right."

"I saw Levin at the Cross Roads Sunday night," said Martha, when he was out of hearing.

"Levin didn't tell me he was at the Cross Roads."

"He was there; him and Hallie Yale."

"Hallie Yale is coming between mother and son again. When Cornelia went off to teach school I offered Hallie a home; in return she walked into my place in my son's affections."

"Levin must be gettin' along; he's more'n thirty, ain't he?"

"Hallie Yale will be thirty-two her next birthday. What did she do while I went to the grand encampment? She actually used the last drop of yeast in the jug. I had brought that yeast from my father's; summer and winter the plant of that yeast had raised all the bread made in this house. I told Hallie Yale that being the case, she and I must part. Said I: 'Never will I give my consent and never shall David give his consent, until Hallie Yale brings back my yeast or some that, like it, came from my father's house.' I'm not superstitious, but nothing's gone right since then. Look at the investment. Now, Martha, what would you advise me to do?"

"I'd get my bread from the baker."

"Umph!"

"People generally ask Miss Ellen Pritchett when they ain't sure about things. Mr. Paul went to her about his new barn."

"Because a woman writes for the papers is no reason that she should know more about barn-building than a carpenter."

She began to make notes on the margin of a Bible that lay on the table with an ink bottle, a pencil, and a pen. She wrote vigorously for half an hour. When she threw aside her pen, Martha took up the conversation:

"They had the missionary at Twyford's last week, but they didn't collect much. Mrs. Giles said she'd have give a dollar if it hadn't been for her husband."

Apollonia laid her folded letter between the covers of her Bible.

"The way I did when I was first mar-

ried and wanted money to contribute—for I always let David carry the purse—I said, 'David, give me the purse. I'll give five dollars.' David used to whisper, 'Pollonia, do you think we can afford that?' 'This is my individual subscription,' said I, 'you give what you can afford.' Giving ought to be a pleasure. Wouldn't I love to hear the moderator read out in public: 'Mrs. Apollonia McKnowlton, five—hundred—dollars.'"

The clock on the shelf whirred and struck the hour. Apollonia took down a horn from behind the door and blew a long-drawn note. Houskeepers within a wide radius were accustomed to gauge her frame of mind by her dinner horn.

Dinner cooled while she read aloud her latest effort.

Martha struck the paper with a red forefinger:

"Don't that look like Miss Ellen Pritchett!"

Across four columns Apollonia read, in type an inch long:

"A prominent literary authoress indorses Florida. Miss Ellen Pritchett, whose contributions to the *Era* are so widely known, sends us the following unsolicited testimonial. Comment is unnecessary. The lady's portrait and letter speak for themselves."

On his way home David had considered the advisability of losing the paper. It had been more than thirty years since he and Apollonia had mentioned Ellen Pritchett's name to each other. He coughed and rubbed his side with his left hand:

"I've got a pain here, 'Pollonia; I wouldn't be surprised if it was pleurisy."

"Nothing of the kind, David. What business have you with pleurisy this weather?" She turned to her son: "I hear you were seen at the Cross Roads with Hallie Yale. Now it's come to this—her or me, and you must make up your mind before the month is out."

Harriet Yale lived with her sister in a little house on the edge of a hill. The straggling fence around the narrow yard was like ineffective arms endeavoring to hold in bounds a rebellious growth of flowers that overran their

limit to reach the dusty road. Two round rows of box hid the path; a bird-house on a tall pole, a dark cedar, and a mulberry tree, its heart-shaped leaves beginning to turn yellow, crowded the place.

When the mist that arose from between the hills hid the orange pumpkins that had glowed in the weeds like gypsy fires, Harriet pushed her way through the box rows and went back to the parlor, where a bunch of chrysanthemums on the center-table and a fire on the hearth were powerless to dispel the cheerless atmosphere of a place in which people have lost a paramount interest.

Cornelia sat by the window with her chin propped in her hand. She smiled when Harriet came in; she had smiled so persistently that her soft lips were never without a curve. She said:

"Hallie."

"Well?"

"I'm going to tell you something awful. I'm afraid I'm going into a decline."

"Where—where do you feel bad?"

"There's a pain *here*, and my color doesn't look natural."

"It looks the same—pretty."

"You always say nice things about my complexion. You see—"

"Maybe there's something you could take. We might ask Miss Ellen Pritchett. She says Florida's splendid."

"I don't want anything."

Harriet went over a list of herbs, boneset, yarrow, and mullein.

"Let me make you some mullein tea and keep it on the back of the stove and just swallow a mouthful every time you think of it."

"Well," assented Cornelia.

"I'll go look for the mullein. I reckon I can find it."

Cornelia caught her dress as she passed:

"Is Levin coming to-night?"

"I don't know. What's the use?"

"Oh, Hallie, if Levin should come and—and—say anything, you won't go away and leave me here all winter by myself?"

"No, I won't," answered Harriet, "you know I wouldn't."

Cornelia stood up.

"Mrs. Tuttle asked me to come down and stay all night. You don't mind, do you?"

"Isn't it too damp?"

"I don't know." She put on her hat deprecatingly and disappeared in the mist.

It was dark when Harriet returned from her long search, and found Levin waiting on the doorstep.

"You were not at church this morning?" he said, after a while.

"No."

"It may be wrong to say so, but the prayers and hymns don't seem the same when you're not there. When you don't come it takes a good deal out of Sunday."

"I'm always here."

"It was you that said stay away for the sake of peace."

"It hasn't brought peace, has it?"

He evaded the question.

"I do stay away till I can stand it no longer, like last Sunday and to-night."

"Whose fault is it?"

He offered the old excuse:

"Mother has not had a fair chance; before she was fifteen she was set up over her family. Authority's not good for a woman, especially if it begins too soon; it takes the sweetness out of 'em. Then she's a born manager; people do as she says and that's not good for her, and when she and father married it was her money that—"

"She's made a heap o' trouble. She came between Owen Raike and Nannie. Even Miss Ellen Pritchett can't bring them together again."

Levin got up from his chair and took her listless hands:

"Could anybody come between you and me; could they?"

"Yes; your mother."

He laughed.

"I love you more because of her—more than I did ten years ago. You don't know what it is for me to see you living here alone."

"I'm not alone. There's Cornelia."

"Cornelia'll go off."

"She won't."

He held her hands fast:

"Won't you see mother?"

"No—no—no!" cried Harriet.

"I love you," he said. He lifted her face quickly and kissed her.

She took the kiss and gave it back.

"I love you, too, but I won't give in again. Remember the last time. I've a great notion to say it—I *will* say it—I'll not see you again until she asks me to!"

He kept hold of her as they walked toward the door.

"Take it back. It was a little bit of heaven for me to come here."

She shook her head.

"I thought no woman could surprise me at this sort of thing, but you have."

"There's going to be one woman at the Cross Roads with a spirit of her own."

She listened until he had closed the gate, and then she went in and stripped the mullein leaves for Cornelia's tea.

A high wind blew the mist away in the night, and Cornelia came up the hill in the brilliant sunshine. She had a letter in her hand and her face wore an expression of ineffable happiness.

"Your tea's in the cracked pitcher on the back of the stove," called Harriet. "Come in and take some now."

"Tea? Oh, yes; the mullein. I don't believe I need it. It's bad to get in the habit of dosing yourself."

Harriet followed her into the parlor; the fire was out, one window was closed, and the place looked prophetically deserted.

Cornelia turned her happy face upon her:

"I've heard from Cousin Sarah. I'd been expecting a letter since Saturday. She wants me to stay with her."

"When?"

"Right away. I can get ready for the mail man as he goes back."

"How long will you be gone?"

"She says all winter."

"What am I to do?"

"I never thought! You might ask Miss Ellen Pritchett. You don't mind, do you?"

Harriet poured out the mullein tea and spent the morning in packing.

After dark the rebellion that had been gathering within her broke forth. She said Levin and Cornelia had deserted her and she was the most forsaken thing in the world.

Cornelia's cat came out of the shadow and purred and arched her back and circled complacently around the table leg.

Harriet sprang to the door and opened it wide:

"Go out! I want to get rid of everything. Go out! Now," she sobbed, "thank the good Lord for *nothing*!"

As cold weather came on, the pain in David's side grew sharper. He gave up his place in the choir, and, instead of leading, he criticised the singing, and his green notebook, from which he used to read *do re mi* every Sunday afternoon, remained unopened on the shelf. At last he lay in his quiet room and looked out on the purple line of the woods, secure in Apollonia's assurance that he would be better by and by.

One morning, when the sun shone over an icy world, he said:

"My feet are cold, 'Pollonia."

She was rubbing the frost from the panes, and she stopped to thrust a chill hand beneath the covers:

"Nothing of the kind, David."

Levin came later and bent over the untroubled old face. For the last month all the tenderness of his nature had gone out to his father.

"I thought I was cold; but 'Pollonia thinks——"

"I'll go for the doctor," said Levin; "mother is mistaken."

David prevented him.

"Your mother never made a mistake," he murmured.

Afterward, Apollonia observed she supposed a thousand people had shown their respect to her by attending the funeral.

She gave the lavish, traditional dinner, and stood at the dining-room door to receive the men and women who hurried decorously across the square hall with its shining balustrade and its cling-



ing odor of generations of apple harvests. All through the afternoon the noise of knives and forks striking sharply on the plates, and the sound of chairs pushed back and forth mingled with the penetrating voice of the widow whose strength deserted her with the guests. She sat in her big chair and gave orders, and she sent Levin to the village for a possible letter.

There was a light twinkling in the window of Harriet Yale's house, and Harriet stood at the gate. Her desire to see him was so strong he could not have passed unobserved in the dark.

"I want you to know how sorry I am for you," she called.

"I know."

"I take it all back that I said the last time you were here. I'll do what I can to set things right with your mother. Good-by."

Three weeks later Martha told Apollonia Harriet Yale had been to see Miss Ellen Pritchett.

"Where's Cornelia? Still in town?"

Before Martha could reply there was a rap on the door.

"Come in," commanded Apollonia.

Harriet Yale lifted the latch. Her cheeks were red, and her quick, brilliant eyes shone; her lips tried to keep back the nervous smile that flitted across their scarlet line, and her hands, that held carefully a small covered bowl, trembled. She went up to Apollonia in her big chair.

"Mrs. McKnowlton," she said, "the last time I was here I didn't think anything in the world could bring me again; but I've been so sorry for you and Levin this winter that I just made up my mind to leave nothing undone, so I went to see Miss Ellen Pritchett."

"What's Ellen Pritchett got to do with it?"

"You said never would you be friends with me till I brought back some of the same yeast that I had taken from your jug. Here it is."

She offered the bowl in her shaking fingers.

Apollonia's hands kept their grasp on the arms of her chair.

"Hallie Yale, where did you get that yeast?"

"Miss Ellen Pritchett gave it to me." A sparkle of anger replaced the merriment in her eyes; she offered the bowl again: "She told me to tell you that this was raised from what you gave her the last time she was at your father's house."

Martha came a step nearer as Apollonia arose and took the bowl.

"I'm a woman of my word," said Apollonia; "Martha here will tell you the same; and if David was present he'd say when I said I'd do a thing I'd do it, and when I said I wouldn't do a thing I wouldn't do it; and I hope I haven't come to this time o' life and lived in this community as long as I have, to make apologies for or explanations of my conduct to any one, and I'll keep my word with you as I'll keep my word with all men," she lifted a judicial countenance upon the suppliant. "Hallie Yale, I said good yeast. *This* is musty."

She concluded the argument after midnight, when Levin reached home from market. Her lantern burned like a danger signal in the hollow by the barn.

"Levin," she cried, as the horses passed with their rattling harness through the door, "is this the way you treat your mother—and her a widow? Your poor father not cold in his grave, and bills coming in from your—your—riotous farming? Bellowses for potato bugs, two dollars. Bags of flour for same, sixty cents. And the family eating mill flour! A list of things a yard and a half long from Giffin's. Do you call this leading the Christian life? Seed potatoes when you ought to raise your own. Didn't I hear you pray not later'n last Sunday for meekness and patience and forbearance in your daily walk? Chains. Plow lines. Your poor father never spent my money for plow lines." Her words, that had begun with harsh precision, hurtled through the air without break or pause. "And if that's not enough, here's Ellen Pritchett interferin' in my household affairs through you, and you send people

to remind me of what I might have said when I was a little excited, and to take me up on my own words, and me, your mother, and if we can no longer reason together we will go to higher authority!"

Shortly after it became known that Levin McKnowlton was to be disciplined by the minister and elders of the church. At the same time posters in stores and offices, on fences, and trees, announced that the undersigned, Mrs. Apollonia McKnowlton, being about to decline housekeeping and to leave the neighborhood, would sell her live stock and household effects at public auction on the first Tuesday in March.

She went to work on the list of her possessions; as often as she revised it, she increased the value, until she was surprised and pleased at the sum total.

"In case the sale is *not* a success," she said to Martha, "what would you advise me to do?"

"You've got a lot o' kin around here," answered Martha; "I'd visit my relations. I'd stay two weeks first with one and then with another, and then I'd go to town. By the time you get through with them all you can begin over again."

Apollonia suspected the impossibility of visiting her relatives.

"It's bound to be a success," she decided; "Ruth Pilker's offered me fifty cents for my ingrain carpet, but it's my privilege to start the bids, and I'm going to start the carpet at fifty-five."

The county was well represented at the sale. There were purchasers, possible purchasers, and those who would buy on indefinite time. In and out of the throng of farmers went the exceptional—a cheerful Italian with a wooden leg, a light-fingered man with a completely bald head, a stranger, with a purple topcoat like a gabardine and a long staff, who suggested a wise man of the East on his homeward way, a negro, some Poles, and a neighbor who was a living affront to Apollonia's prohibition principles, and who bid uselessly and extravagantly on all that was offered.

Down by the barn with the straw rick for a background, David's old white horse was put up for sale.

"Nine and a half-an-a-half-an-a-half," sang the auctioneer. "Who makes it ten?"

"Ten," called a voice.

"Ten!" shouted the auctioneer. "Ten—ten-ten-ten. Ten. Mr. Tipton, this valuable animal is yours."

Apollonia stood in the hall with its odor of apples.

"It's a bad day for the neighborhood that sees you going out of it, Mrs. McKnowlton," cried an old woman with a face full of sharp wrinkles like splintered glass; "Mrs. Allers, here, wants your Irish quilt, and I want a comfort or two myself if they don't be too high."

"Good comforts ought to bring good money, grandmother," urged another; "I want some china. You can never get anything like what you paid for china."

"Mrs. Allers," said Apollonia, "that Irish quilt came to me through David's great-aunt; I've heard it cost thirty dollars. It's down on my list at ten, and a bargain."

"Pollonia," remarked a friend who had arrived late, "I'm sorry to see you turning yourself out of house and home as a body might say!"

Apollonia was about to remark that there was where she missed David, when Ruth seized her by the arm:

"The family carriage has been withdrawn at forty cents," she whispered, "and Levin's bid in all the stock, and the auctioneer's coming in for his dinner, and——"

"Mrs. McKnowlton," called a loud voice on the other side, "I want to know if I can't get out of the old gray hoss? I don't want a hoss no way. I'm deaf. Fact is, I ain't got no money. I was just biddin' in a friendly way to help things along."

Apollonia answered both:

"Lift dinner, Ruth. Terms cash or note payable at three or six months. Caroline, Levin's gone and bid in all my stock and farming implements. Levin knows nobody'll bid against a member of the family. Levin shall *not* have this

place to bring Hallie Yale here. Caroline, what would you advise me to do? Mr. Ryland, if you're going down by the stable, be so kind as to see that the door's shut, and John—John Curlett, you're going past the wood pile, you might as well carry in an armful of wood."

Dinner was served in the dining-room, while trays of sandwiches were passed to the crowd without. When the auctioneer took his place under the linden, a spirited bidding began for the lot of odd glassware and crockery, the ill-assorted knives and forks.

"Things are looking up, 'Pollonia," said Caroline, "it's just like town; reminds me of the bargain counter at Bradishes on a market day."

An anger that threatened to paralyze speech had taken possession of Apollonia. She saw the parlor organ and the looking-glass knocked down for a song, and she said nothing when Martha whispered:

"The parlor sofy's gone for a dollar twenty-five, and Minor Gam's got the big rocking-chair for sixty-three cents."

"Here's a fine ingrain carpet," shouted the auctioneer, "with a valuable, stylish pattern in black and red and green. What am I bid, ladies and gentlemen, on this excellent, durable, and extremely stylish carpet? What d'ye bid? What d'ye bid?"

"Ten cents."

"Ten cents for this exceedingly stylish and durable carpet? Ten cents?"

"Ten cents a yard," explained the voice.

Martha shook Apollonia's arm.

"They've started the ingrain at ten cents, and Ruth offered fifty!"

"Ten, is it? Ten—ten. Make it twelve. Twelve—twelve—very well, sir. Twelve—twelve—twelve. Who says fifteen?"

"Where's Ruth Pilker?" cried Apollonia. "She offered fifty cents for that carpet at private sale, and she's got to start the bid at that."

"There she goes over by the woods. She left when they put up the ingrain."

"Sale's off. Mr. Prescott—Mr. Prescott, stop the bidding!"

"Fifteen—fifteen—fifteen. Seventeen? Yes, ma'am. A handsome, stylish, and durable article going for seventeen cents."

Again the benumbing anger took possession of Apollonia.

Two old women—the last of the purchasers to leave—stopped at the foot of the steps.

"You're going home, grandmother?" said the younger. "Yes, ma'am. Well, you've got your comforts for nothing, and I've got a real Irish quilt for less. You go that a way, grandmother, and I go this a way. Good-by, and bless you."

The place was left to a forsaken silence, which was emphasized by the complaining voice of a guinea hen as it made an endless round.

In the empty rooms Apollonia's tread awoke new and startling sounds. Rebellion against a baffled will rose to desperation. She put on a red cap and a gray dressing-gown, which she had once presented to David for ornament, and went out. She found a barrow and began to trundle it vigorously over the frozen clay. The guinea hen followed.

Halfway down the lane, a fat old horse was drawing a low buggy at a leisurely pace that met the approval of the woman who held the reins. She had a ponderous forehead and a tolerant expression in her brown eyes, as if she understood human frailty and made allowance. When she met the odd figure behind the barrow she wrapped the reins around both hands and pulled hard.

"Ellen Pritchett!" cried Apollonia.

The visitor indicated the dismantled house with a motion of her whip:

"Apollonia," her voice had fallen habitually into a monotone, "I am sorry to see this."

"The guinea has lost her mate, poor thing! and the Widow Wisdom," answered Apollonia, inconsequently, "took the fodder, a thousand shocks at three cents a shock. There's fifty more than she's entitled to, and there's no use letting her have more than she's paid for. You know I ain't used to this. Here's where I miss David." She broke

down: "I'm not wanted here. I might as well join the Salvation Army. Oh, Ellen, what would *you* advise me to do?"

Miss Ellen Pritchett folded the reins around the whip and her horse bit at the yellow grass, while she searched in a beaded bag for a letter. It was worn and discolored, and she held it jealously in her left hand.

"Although the domestic hearth offers the loftiest scope for a woman's talents and energies, it was never meant for you, Apollonia. Your energy, that is largely executive, requires a wider field. I am here this evening from a sense of duty—not to myself—but to two whom circumstances, represented by yourself, seem to have set farther apart than ever. I have not intruded upon you, Apollonia. I left the church of my fathers that my presence might not be a reproach to you. If our neighbors have approved my judgment to the extent of coming to me for advice, I, at least, have had reason to doubt the infallibility of your own. Do you remember this letter? I hear that an ecclesiastical court is to be asked to sit in judgment on Levin, and that he is to be accused publicly of being a rebellious son. You have placed, unconsciously, perhaps, obstructions in the way of more than one marriage. If David's son is brought to trial I must offer your own words in evidence against you. No one but ourselves knows the cause of the sudden disruption of our friendship. This"—she held the letter up—"is your reply when, after David had asked *me* to be his wife, I went to you for advice. In it, you tell me to say no, and to abide by it, that David is not the man to make a woman happy. I rejected David and—you married him yourself!"

The waves under the edge of Apollonia's red cap trembled; the frozen ground seemed slipping from beneath her feet.

"I bear you no malice, Ellen, for keeping my letter," she said, "although it would have been only proper if it had been destroyed at my marriage. What is there left for me? A woman brings a son into the world for some Hallie

Yale or other, all she can claim as her own is her husband, and there's where I miss David. I am turned out of my home. The parlor sofa's gone for a dollar and a quarter; the matting and the best window shades for a cent and a half, the ingrain carpet for thirty-five cents a yard, when Ruth Pilker offered me fifty. Let Hallie Yale *take* Levin!"

"Then you consent?"

"I'm worn out."

In the awkward pause that followed Apollonia looked across the field to a moving shadow.

"There's Levin's heifers out again. I've passed through the deep waters with those calves, and there goes Levin now, up to the road."

"Good-by"—she wrapped the reins about her hands and made a wide turn in the wheat—"let occurrences that have been, be as though they never were."

"Good-by," answered Apollonia. She watched the wheels of the buggy settle into the icy ruts. "Ellen, oh, Ellen! Will you be so kind as to shut the gate in the meadow as you go by?"

In the road, Harriet Yale's thin figure in a plaid cape passed swiftly through the twilight.

"Is that you, Miss Ellen?"

"It is I."

"Miss Ellen, I just got a letter from Cornelia." She began to crush against her breast the letter she held in her mitten hands. "She's not coming back. She—she's going to get married right away; a widower and six children."

"Glad to hear it. There's Levin coming across the field, Hallie. Good-night."

She turned her horse into the valley road. A narrow line of dull red marked the gray where the sun had set; below, between the hills, a white mist rolled imposingly forward.

"If anything will take the selfishness out of Cornelia Yale, I should think a widower and six children might," said Miss Ellen Pritchett. She thought of Harriet. "Poor little lonely soul! I wish I had taken Apollonia in hand long ago."

